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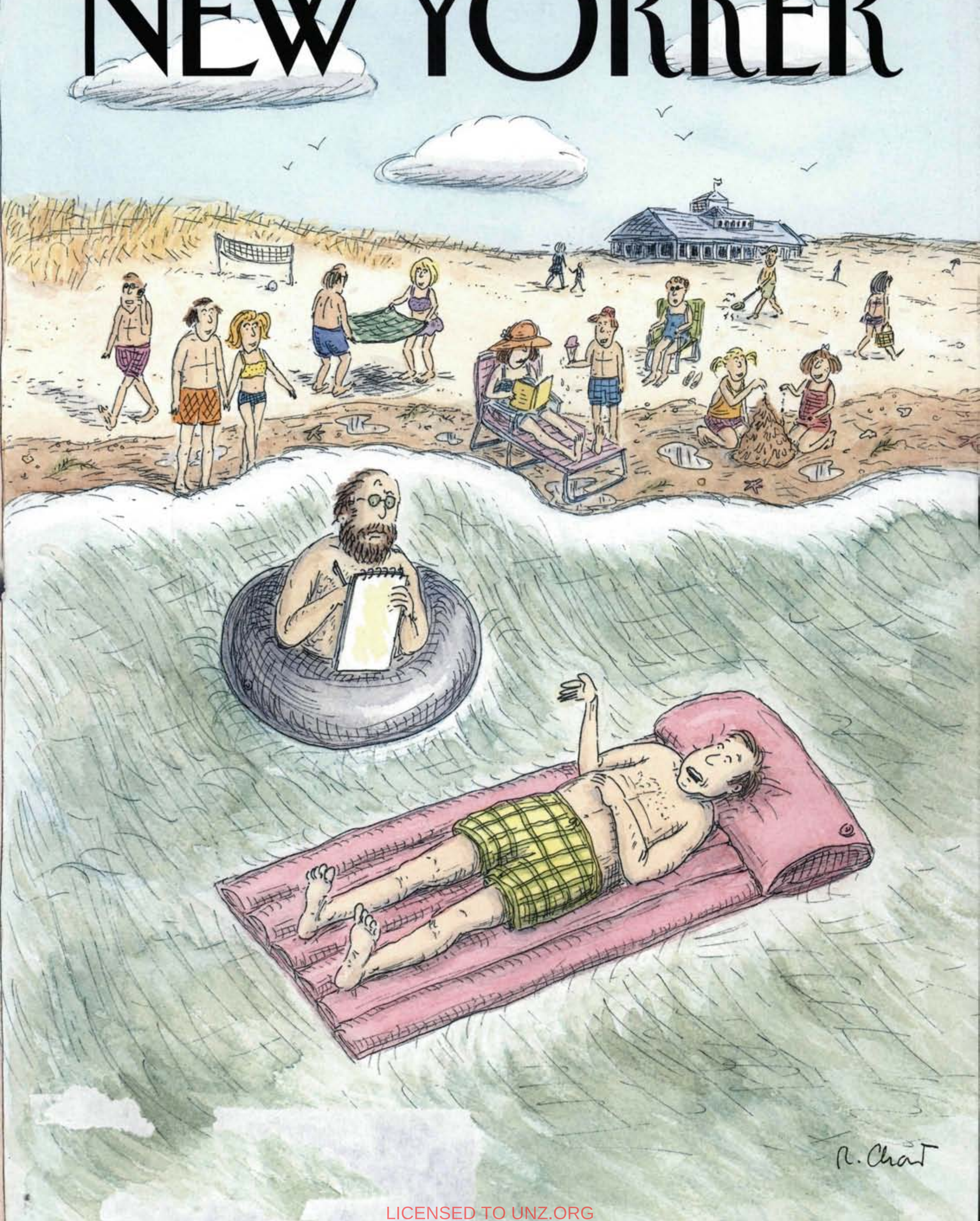
AUG. 7 & 14, 2006



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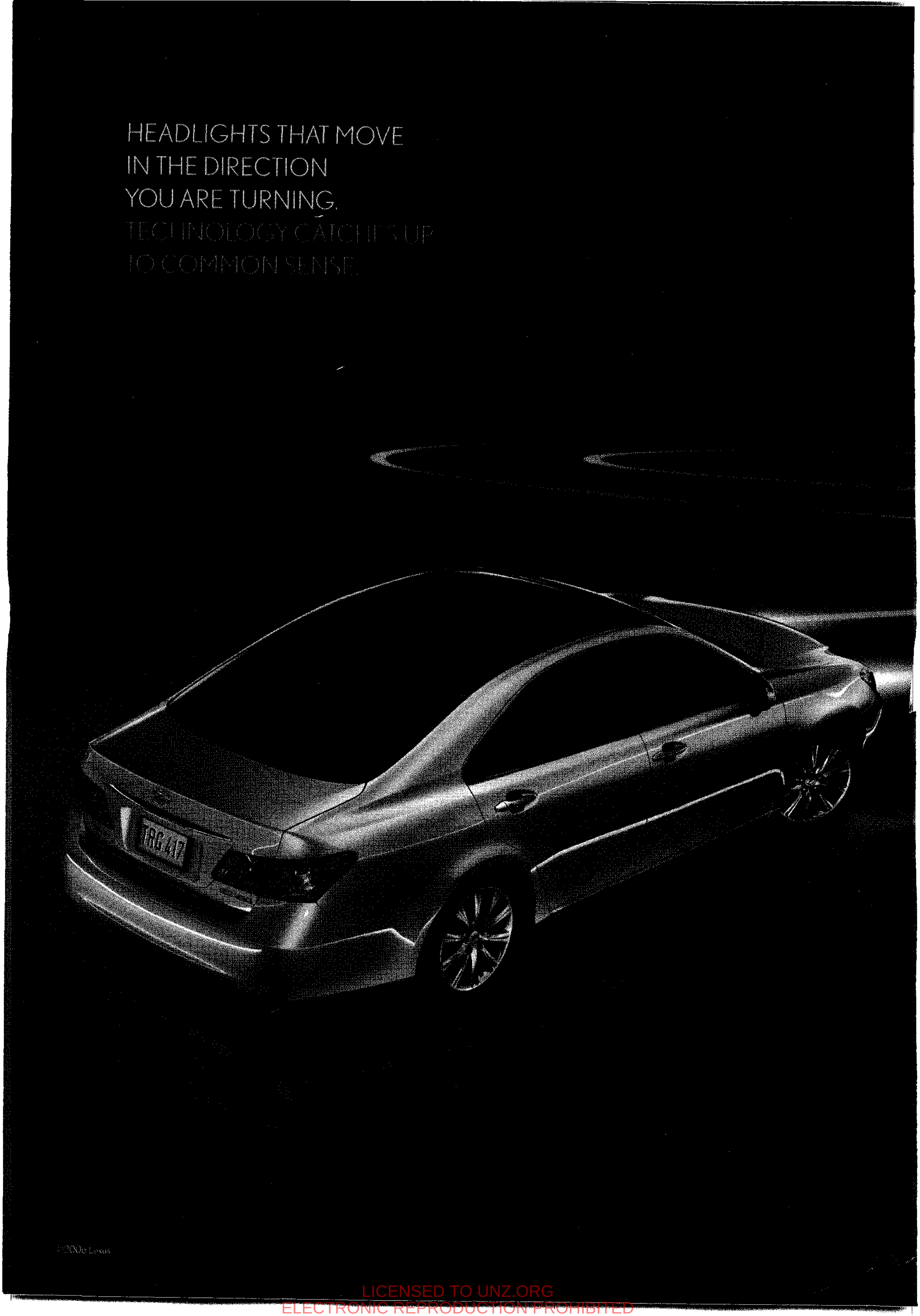
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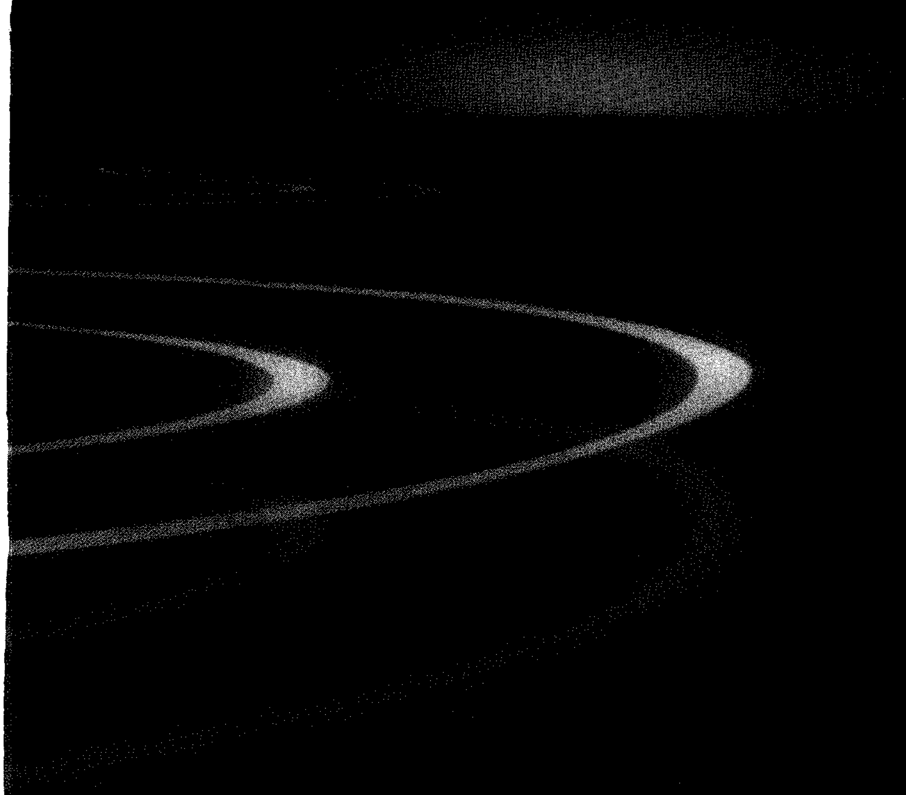

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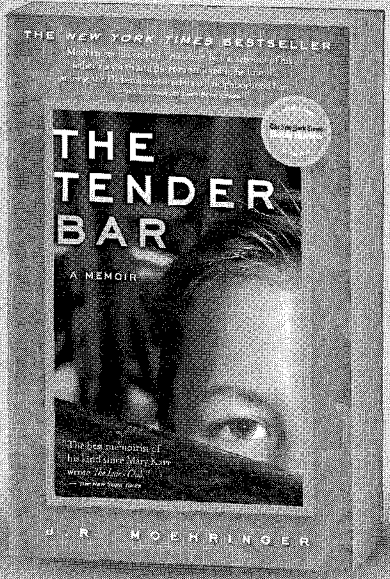

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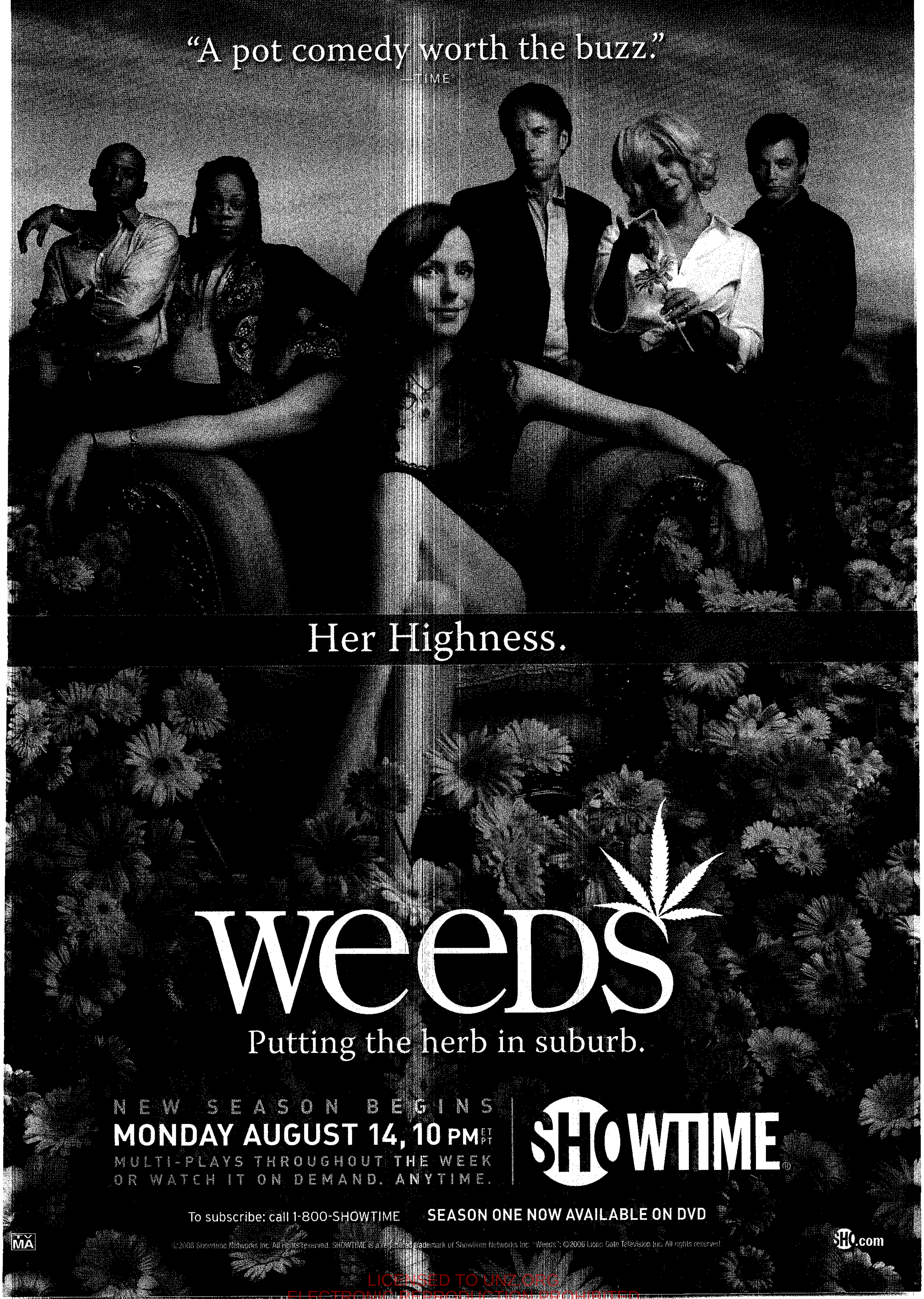

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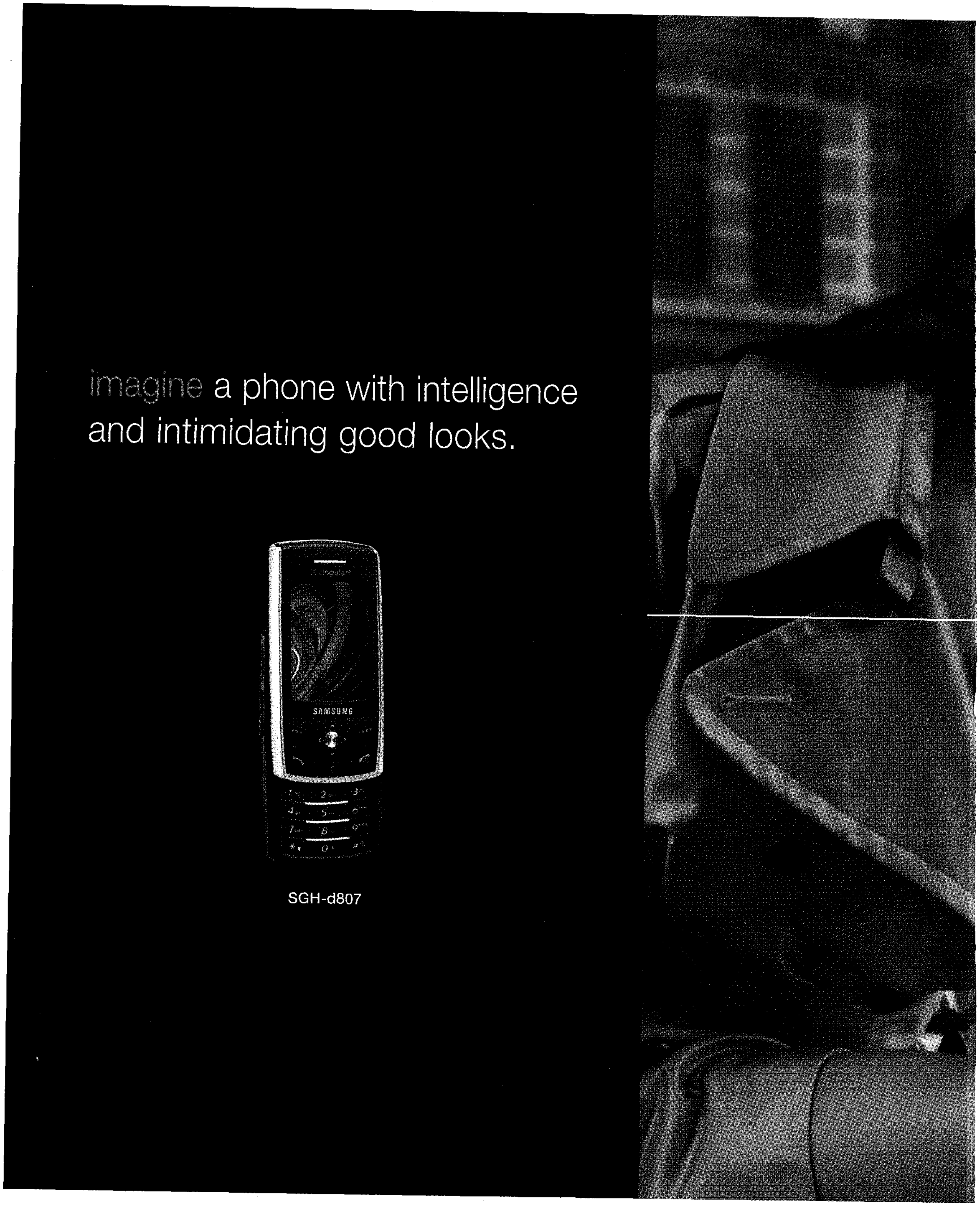
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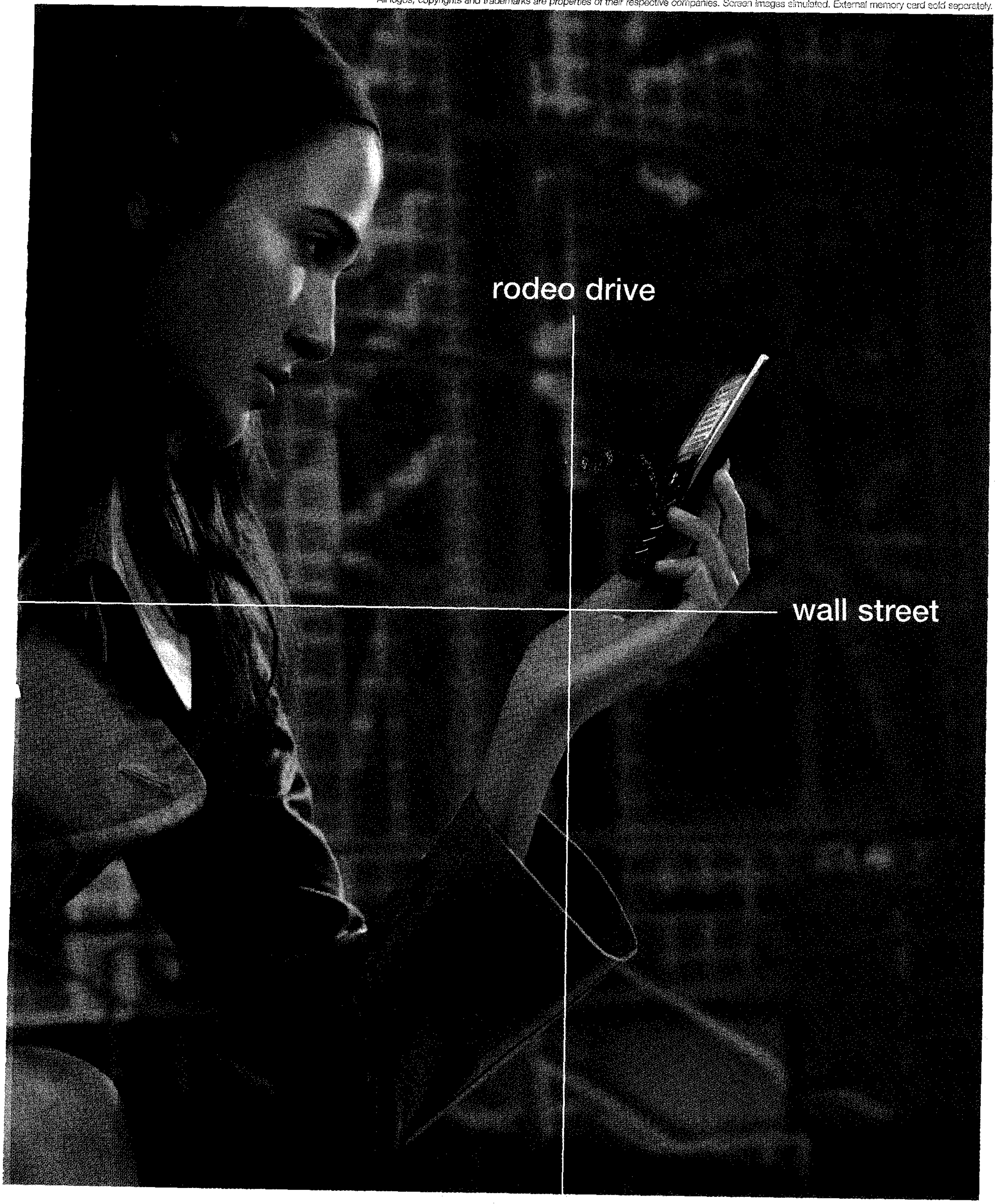

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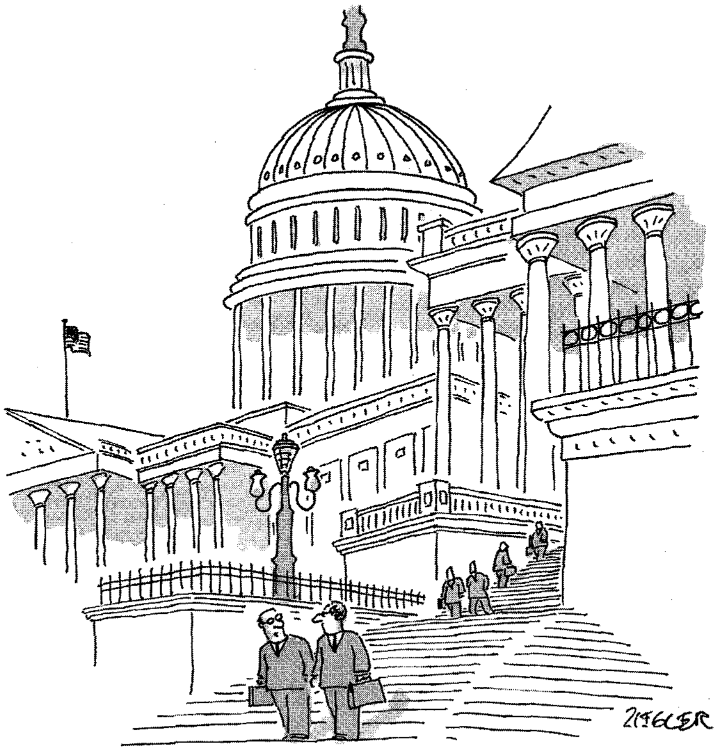
Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 90) writes the pop-music column for the magazine. ♦



"Of course, it would be a different story entirely if we could extract crude oil from stem cells."

THE MAIL

NEW YORKERS AT WAR

Tad Friend describes the Blue Collar Comedy demographic by noting the comedians' rejection of New York and Hollywood and all that these two cities stand for ("Blue-Collar Gold," July 10th & 17th). The Georgia native Jeff Foxworthy takes exception to the idea of catering to a New York audience, maintaining that his fellow-citizens are the real backbone of America—the churchgoers, "the ones who get up and go to war." How tired I am of this claim on the part of the South and the heartland! New York state and also New York City are quite well represented in the military. We go to war and we die in war. The Iraq Coalition Casualty Count Web site, using Department of Defense data, offers lists of casualties by state and by city. It seems logical to assume that casualty rates are in proportion to enlistment rates, and of the hundred and twenty-two New York-state casualties, fifty per cent came from the New York metropolitan area. Perhaps this will help lay to rest the notion that New Yorkers are somehow less patriotic, less supportive of the troops, less "American" than the rest of the country.

Karen Green
New York City

DISRAELI'S AFFAIRS

In Adam Gopnik's review of two current biographies of the British statesman Benjamin Disraeli, he writes, "Most of his biographers now settle on the formula that he was, in our sense, a closeted gay man" (A Critic at Large, July 3rd). As a biographer of Disraeli myself, I found no such evidence. Dandyish "Regency" attire in Disraeli's younger years could be macho, and effusive letters to political acolytes were common through Disraeli's century. While he married a wealthy widow much his elder in order to save himself from deep debt, the couple became devoted to each other. As she faded with age and illness, Disraeli did turn to other women, and had a son, Ralph, by one of them, and a daughter, Kate, by another. Ralph's family (he died without issue) at first denied his parentage to me, and only after my biography was published did his nephew acknowledge the connection and send me a copy of Ralph's portrait by Sir William Orpen. I also published a portrait photo of Kate, who looks strikingly like the young Disraeli.

Stanley Weintraub
Newark, Del.

TRIBAL IDENTIFICATION

Ian Frazier, in his otherwise well-researched article on the history of Co-op City, the housing complex in the Bronx, writes that the Siwanoy were an Algonquian tribe "of the same linguistic family as the Menominee of Wisconsin, the Chippewa of the Plains, and the Cree of Canada" ("Utopia, the Bronx," June 26th). As a member of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe in northern Minnesota, I want to correct Frazier on two points: we prefer to be known as Ojibwe, and we have never been a Plains tribe. Although some Ojibwe moved west onto the plains beginning in the eighteenth century, we are predominately a woodlands tribe whose territory stretches from Michigan to Montana, and from Wisconsin to northwestern Ontario. With inroads being made against Indian tribes by state and federal governments, the constant erosion of treaty rights, and the persistent and pervasive idea held by many that we used to exist but don't any longer, it is important to remember that we do indeed exist and that we exist in specific places and are called specific names.

David Treuer
Minneapolis, Minn.

•

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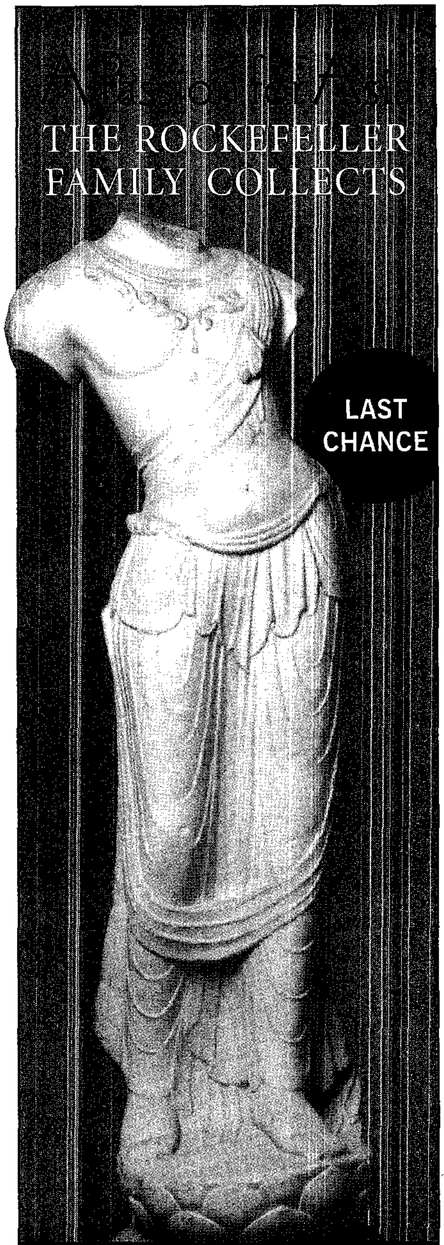

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Bodhisattva; China; Tang (618–907), first half of the 8th century; Collection of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Nelson A. Rockefeller bequest, Kykuit. Photo: John Bigelow Taylor

HONG KONG
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Racers preparing for the Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival in New York. Photograph by Brian Finke.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15				

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE TENT SHOW

The travelling Spiegeltent—a mirrored marquee built of wood and leaded glass and draped with velvet and brocade—setting down at South Street Seaport may not be the very same one in which Marlene Dietrich performed in the thirties in Berlin. There are fewer than a dozen in existence, and all claim the honor. One of the events taking place within the touring stage is "Absinthe," a burlesque circus featuring acrobats, a cabaret singer, and a sword swallower. (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE ANOTHER CHAPTER

The Southern-soul vocalist Candi Staton, who is making her first New York City appearance in twenty years with a show at the Bowery Ballroom, started as a child gospel singer and went on to score a number of R. & B. and disco hits. In 1982, she returned to recording gospel albums, though her new album, "His Hands," is soul music. (See page 12.)

ART AMERICAN SOUND

In the Great Depression, the musicologist Alan Lomax and his father, John, crisscrossed the country recording Leadbelly, Muddy Waters, and hundreds of other musicians. A show at Brooklyn Fire Proof gathers photographs and equipment from their travels. (See page 17.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC MORE MOZART

Mostly Mozart's music director, Louis Langrée, is a regular at European opera houses, but this summer he conducts his first opera at Lincoln Center—"Zaide," Mozart's exquisite (if unfinished) singspiel, in a new production by Peter Sellars. (See page 18.)

MOVIES MONDAY FUNDAYS

Buster Keaton, the Great Stoneface, blankly averted calamity with the athletic grace of the great modern dancers. Mondays in August and September, Film Forum will show most of Keaton's silent classics, beginning with his Civil War comedy, "The General," from 1927, with its startlingly choreographed action atop a train, and including three short films made from 1920 to 1922. (See page 23.)

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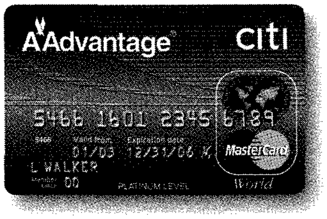

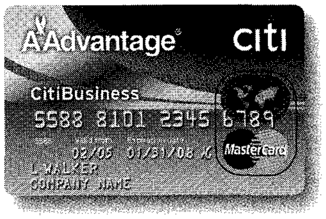

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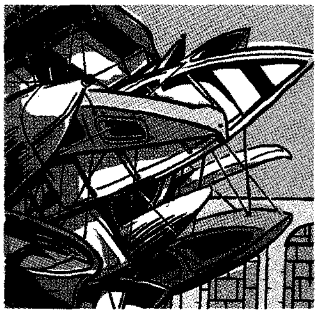

PAUL HOPPE

The summer installation at Lincoln Center of "Big Pleasure Point," an immense sculpture of old boats and assorted derelict fun craft by the Californian genius of junk, Nancy Rubins, who is known for trussed and welded congeries of airplane parts and whole trailer houses, should not pass without grateful plaudits. It wouldn't pass at all if life were fair. Nothing else will likely ever adorn the urbane plaza so satisfactorily, with such grandeur, spunk, and poetic savor. Dozens of rowboats, canoes, kayaks, and surfboards, and the odd paddleboat and power ski, canted every which way, form an articulated mass that rises to about four stories high and extends even wider. Colors include primaries and secondaries, plus silver, white, pink, mint, and, natch, aqua. Aluminum, fibreglass, and plastic contribute their textural quiddities. Depending on one's viewpoint, the configuration appears to soar, surge, hover, or cascade. Almost alone among junk sculptors, Rubins considers individual components as carefully as what becomes of them. The effect is like an orchestral crescendo in which each instrument shines.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABSINTHE
A burlesque circus show that incorporates a torch singer, acrobats, a contortionist, and a sword swallower, presented in a travelling Spiegeltent built in Belgium in the twenties. Previews begin Aug. 3. Opens Aug. 9. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-279-4200.)

ANAÏS NIN: ONE OF HER LIVES
Wendy Beckett wrote and directs this bio-play set in Paris in the thirties. Previews begin Aug. 3. Opens Aug. 5. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

CREATION: A CLOWN SHOW
Lucas Caleb Rooney's one-man clown show reinterprets the Book of Genesis. Orlando Pabotoy directs. Previews begin Aug. 4. Opens Aug. 10. (Theatre Five, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-868-4444.)

THE DISPUTE
An Asian-American cast performs Pierre Marivaux's eighteenth-century romantic comedy, in which two men and two women are observed by a prince and his court to see who will sin first. Previews begin Aug. 4. Opens Aug. 8. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

EVERYTHINGS TURNING INTO BEAUTIFUL
The New Group concludes its season with a new play by Seth Zvi Rosenfeld, about a luckless songwriting duo. With songs by Jimmie James. Carl Forsman directs. In previews. Opens Aug. 3. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE FANTASTICKS
The world's longest-running musical has returned after a four-year hiatus. Written and directed by Tom Jones, with music by Harvey Schmidt. In previews. (Snapple Theatre Center, 210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100.)

INDIAN BLOOD
Primary Stages presents the world première of a new comedy by A. R. Gurney, about a young man who uses his Native American ancestry as justification for his defiant behavior. Mark Lamos directs. In previews. Opens Aug. 9. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

KIKI & HERB: ALIVE ON BROADWAY
Justin Bond and Kenny Mellman bring their fabulous mock-cabaret act to Broadway. Previews begin Aug. 11. Opens Aug. 15. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARCO MILLIONS (BASED ON LIES)
Tom Ridgely directs this drama adapted from Eugene O'Neill's play about the travels of Marco Polo. Previews begin Aug. 4. Opens Aug. 12. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES ME
The comedian and "Saturday Night Live" alum stars in a mock-autobiographical musical, with original songs by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman. Written by Short, Shaiman, and Wittman, who also directs. In previews. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

MR. DOOLEY'S AMERICA
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents this comedy based on the turn-of-the-century newspaper columnist Finley Peter Dunne, who wrote social and political commentary in the guise of a fictitious Irish pub owner. Written by Philip Dunne and Martin Blaine. Previews begin Aug. 10. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN
Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline star in Bertolt Brecht's tale about a matriarch who loses several children to an ongoing war. The final Shakespeare in the Park production is translated by Tony Kushner and directed by George C. Wolfe. Previews begin Aug. 8. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
The tenth annual celebration of downtown theatre includes more than two hundred shows at twenty-one venues. Highlights include the Rude Mechanicals' political drama "I Coulda Been a Kennedy"; "A Time to Be Born," a musical based on Dawn Powell's 1942 novel; and Catherine Capellaro and Andrew Rohn's big-business musical satire, "Walmartopia." Aug. 11-27. (212-279-4488. For full schedule, visit www.fringenyc.org.)

SEVEN GUITARS
The first of three August Wilson plays to be produced by the Signature Theatre Company follows seven people struggling in Pittsburgh's Hill District in the late forties. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

NOW PLAYING

ALL THIS INTIMACY
Second Stage Theatre presents the world première of a play by Rajiv Joseph, about a thirty-year-old man juggling several girlfriends. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422. Through Aug. 12.)

AMAJUBA: LIKE DOVES WE RISE
"Somewhere beneath the dust is the past, and until we go back and claim each broken piece we will never be free," says Tshallo, one of five vibrant actors who take turns sharing their stories of childhood adversity under apartheid in this moving and kinetic production from Johannesburg, created and directed by Yael Farber. Their goal may be exorcism, but the effect is more like exultation; the performance is as much a testament to spiritual strength as hard evidence of it. Dance and a-cappella singing, which play a large role in the piece, stand as powerful symbols of that force—greater than hunger or despair—that kept a generation of South Africans going through the worst of times. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM
This festival, presented by HERE Arts Center, showcases dozens of new works that incorporate theatre, dance, puppets, and video. (3LD Arts & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-868-4444.)

CLOUD TECTONICS
It's a proverbial dark and stormy night when the innocent-looking Aníbal (a delightfully bemused Luis Vega) picks up a pregnant hitchhiker, the drenched Celestina (Frederique Nahmani), on Santa Monica Boulevard and takes her to his home, where all the clocks immediately stop. Sensitively revived by James Phillip Gates, José Rivera's contemporary fable has a poetic and sensual charm, in spite of an epilogue that errs in overexplicating its mysteries. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 5.)

ICE FACTORY FESTIVAL
Soho Think Tank's festival of new work concludes with Michael Voyer's "The Jaded Assassin," conceived and directed by Timothy Haskell. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 12.)

ROOM SERVICE
Peccadillo Theatre presents a suave and cunning revival of the 1937 show-biz farce, about an unscrupulous would-be producer, Gordon Miller (David Edwards), who is holed up with an entourage of actors and lackeys in a hotel managed by his mousy brother-in-law (played by Dale Carman, who exudes anxiety). Under the able direction of Dan Wackerman, the thirties gags receive the proper period accents, making for some colorful and outrageous antics. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 5.)

SHOUT! THE MOD MUSICAL
England in the nineteen-sixties is the setting of this musical revue, about the coming-of-age of five young women. Phillip George directs. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200.)

A STONE CARVER
A sentimental case study of eminent domain, written by William Mastrosimone and starring Dan Lauria (who played the dad in "The Wonder Years") as Agostino, an Old World lug who, when bulldozers arrive at his home to clear a path for a highway off-ramp, refuses to leave, in spite of the pleas of his son, Raff (Jim Iorio). Raff's new, buttoned-up fiancée (Elizabeth Rossa) is also there, giving rise

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So just how does the Volkswagen Passat do all these things yet give off far fewer ego emissions than more expensive German sedans? Well, we could take a guess.

It's a Volkswagen.

*Optional. **Airbags are supplemental restraints only and will not deploy under all accident circumstances. Always use safety belts and seat children only in the rear, using restraint systems appropriate for their sizes and ages. †Silver IIHS safety pick. ©2006 Volkswagen of America, Inc.

to a meet-the-parents scenario that only emphasizes the broadness of Lauria's character: with his cap and overalls and "I picka da tomatoes" approximation of a Sicilian accent, he brings to mind not so much a beloved relative as a lost Mario Brother. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

BARD SUMMERSCAPE
The Danish troupe Gruppe 38 brings its spare production of the Hans Christian Andersen classic "The Little Match Girl." Aug. 5-6. (Fisher Center for the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. 845-758-7900.)

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Tennessee Williams's "Night of the Iguana" plays through Aug. 12. Wendy Wasserstein's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "The Heidi Chronicles," begins previews Aug. 15. At the intimate Unicorn Theatre, "The Pilgrim Papers" continues its run. (Stockbridge, Mass. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Terrence O'Brien directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Gia Forakis directs "The Rivals." (Garrison, N.Y. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
Will Frears directs "Romeo and Juliet," at the Main Stage Aug. 2-13. At the Nikos Stage, John Belluso's "A Nervous Smile" plays through Aug. 6; "The Opposite of Sex," a musical based on the movie by Don Roos, opens Aug. 9. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BRIDGE & TUNNEL:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. Through Aug. 6. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FAITH HEALER:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. Through Aug. 13. **THE FIELD:** Irish Repertory, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Through Aug. 6. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD...:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PIG FARM:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Atlantic Theatre Company, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200. Through Aug. 5. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TALK OF THE TOWN:** Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800. **[TITLE OF SHOW]:** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-279-4200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 2: The ageless guitarist **Bo Diddley** and his signature beat. Aug. 3: In the mid-eighties, the local boys in the **Crumbsuckers** took part, along with more notorious acts, such as the Cro-Mags and Agnostic Front, in the spot-welding of punk to heavy metal. Two decades later the band is back for a reunion show.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 3: The Latin Alternative Music Conference presents the genre-hopping Spanish electronica act the **Pinker Tones**, the Cuban-American rapper **Pitbull**, the local Latin hip-hop crew **Tres Coronas**, and others. Aug. 9: After a long spell of singing only gospel music, the Hanceville, Alabama, native **Candi Staton**, the onetime First Lady of Southern Soul, has returned to secular music. Her new album, "His Hands," has the country edge that first made her famous—its title track was written by Will Oldham (see Joe's Pub). With the young Bronx-based soul singer **Stephanie McKay.** Aug. 12: The **Throwing Muses,** stalwarts of the American alternative scene from back when it was known as "college rock," crafts endearingly off-kilter music that wobbles between accessible pop and surreal post-punk. The Muses' leader, Kristin Hersh, opens the show with **50 Foot Wave,** a trio that showcases her rockier side. Aug. 14-15: **Dirty Pretty Things,** which is led by Carl Barat, formerly of the celebrated but short-lived British band the Libertines.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—Aug. 3: The jazz guitarist **Bill Frisell** performs original music to accompany short films by Buster Keaton ("High Sign" and "One Week"), animations by Jim Woodring, and work by the artist Bill Morrison. With the Hawaiian swing of the **Moonlighters.** Aug. 4: The Latin Alternative Music Conference presents the Venezuelan dance band **Los Amigos Invisibles** and others. Aug. 5, starting at 2: A daylong African Festival, with the Congolese rumbas of **Kekele,** the Afro-pop of the masked Nigerian saxophonist **Lagbaja,** and much more. Aug. 7: **Manu Chao** performs a benefit concert. Born in Paris to Spanish parents, Chao sings in the tongues of his birthplace and his ancestors, as well as in English and other languages. His music—a hyperactively rhythmic mesh of multicultural influences—is so broad-reaching it is the aural manifestation of globalism, but Chao is no free-market cheerleader: his former band, Mano Negra, was named after an Andalusian anarchist group, and he's a politically active artist who's not exactly pro-Bush. Aug. 12: The powerfully entertaining vocalists **Queen Latifah, Jill Scott,** and **Erykah Badu** join forces for a benefit concert.

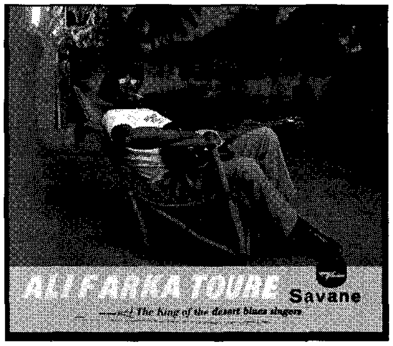
CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—Aug. 5: The Argentinean guitarist and singer **Gustavo Cerati,** the reggaetón duo **Calle 13,** and the electronica act **Mexican Institute of Sound,** courtesy of the Latin Alternative Music Conference. Aug. 6: A screening of the documentary "This Is Bossa Nova," directed by Paulo Thiago. With the astonishing Brazilian performer **Lenine.** Aug. 12: A little bit of Fat Tuesday in August with **Irma Thomas,** the Soul Queen of New Orleans; the **Wild Magnolia Mardi Gras Indians,** led by Big Chief Bo Dollis; and other bands.

CODA
34 E. 34th St. (212-685-3434)—Aug. 4: **Jon Cleary,** a British blues keyboard player with a penchant for the music of the Crescent City, stops by with his band, the Absolute Monster Gentlemen. Aug. 10: The raucous sounds of New Orleans's **ReBirth Brass Band.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 3: Though Minneapolis's **Soul Asylum** never achieved the critical clout of their fellow-Minnesotans Hüsker Dü and the Replacements, it scored a clutch of hits at the dawn of the nineties. In May of 2004 the bassist Karl Mueller, a founding member, was diagnosed with throat cancer, but the band managed to complete a new album, "The Silver Lining," before his death, last year.

Words on Music

Borders' music expert Chuck Hugener says:
"The final solo album by one of Africa's most beloved musicians was recorded in Mali with a combination of traditional and contemporary musicians. It's both a profound listening experience and an extraordinary testament."



"When the dust of history settles on the period we are living through now, which bluesman will be seen as the epitome of our time? Clapton, Hendrix, BB King, Johnny Cash? Or could it be this maestro from the Sahara?"
The Observer, London

"As pure and deep an expression of the blues as you will ever hear – up there with the unearthy recordings of Robert Johnson or early Muddy Waters."
Songlines, London

BORDERS®

Tommy Stinson, formerly of the Replacements, is handling bass on the tour. Aug. 7: **Gary Numan.** A footnote to most, a punch line to some, and a deity to an élite, perhaps deluded, few, the British electro-pop pioneer discounts his perceived status as a one-hit wonder ("Cars") and carries on in robotic form, to the delight of his fans, known as "Numanoids."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 5: The old-time protest singer **Hazel Dickens** teams up with the alt-country hero **Will Oldham** (who records as Palace Brothers and Bonny Prince Billy) and his brothers and occasional collaborators **Ned** and **Paul** for a night of traditional American fare. Aug. 8: **Lenine** (see Central Park SummerStage).

LATIN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC CONFERENCE
Rock, rap, funk, reggaetón, metal, and electronica coexist comfortably during this music festival cum industry summit, which runs Aug. 2-Aug. 5. Insiders will attend the panel discussions, but music fans and dancers will want to catch the shows. One promising one presents **Pacha** (which plays down-tempo trip-hop) and **Hip Hop Hoodios** (which is downright funny), at El Museo del Barrio (Fifth Ave. at 104th St. Aug. 3.) See also the Bowery Ballroom, Celebrate Brooklyn!, and Central Park Summerstage. (For more information, visit www.latinalternative.com.)

LINCOLN CENTER OUT OF DOORS
This annual festival, now in its thirty-sixth year, fills the plazas around the Upper West Side cultural institution with free concerts and performances. Highlights include the pianists **Cyrus Chestnut, Junior Mance,** and **Arturo O'Farrill** (Aug. 6), the **Dirty Dozen Brass Band** (Aug. 8), and a daylong celebration of carnival capped by the **Mighty Sparrow** (Aug. 13). (For complete schedule, visit www.lincolncenter.org. Through Aug. 27.)

QUEENS THEATRE IN THE PARK
Flushing Meadows Corona Park, Queens (718-760-0064)—The JPMorgan Chase Latino Cultural Festival celebrates its tenth anniversary with appearances by performers from throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Highlights include **Albita,** the singer known as the Cuban Madonna, on Aug. 4, and the Lima-based music-and-dance ensemble **Perú Negro,** on Aug. 8.

SPIEGELTENT
Pier 17, South Street Seaport (212-279-4200)—This newly installed mirrored tent has a rich history: Marlene Dietrich may or may not have once graced its stage. This month, and into the fall, it is home to the show "Absinthe" (see The Theatre) as well as a number of concerts. Aug. 8-9: The theatrical band **Menlo Park,** which is led by Paul Simon's son Harper. Aug. 10: The vocalist **Diamanda Galás** commences a run of Thursday nights. Aug. 11 and 13: The sweet sounds of **Las Rubias del Norte.** Aug. 14-15: New Orleans's **Preservation Hall Jazz Band** channels the primordial urge to stomp.

UNION POOL
484 Union Ave., at Meeker Ave., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-609-0484)—Aug. 5: "Spazzstock 2006" presents the return of the **Sea Monkeys,** a local punk band that spent the past decade (and a few years before that) pushing the boundaries of volume and speed. This is their first show in five years. Also on the bill are the all-girl punk band the **Plungers, World War IX,** and **Sato & Jonny,** a rockabilly band featuring the lead singer of the Plungers.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 2-5: **Pat Martino's** most recent album, "Remember: A Tribute to Wes Montgomery," pays homage to one of his prime influences, but the guitarist, a fleet modernist, has long been a legend in his own right. Aug. 9-12: The saxophonist **Joe Lovano** reunites with the trumpeter **Tom Harrell,** a fre-

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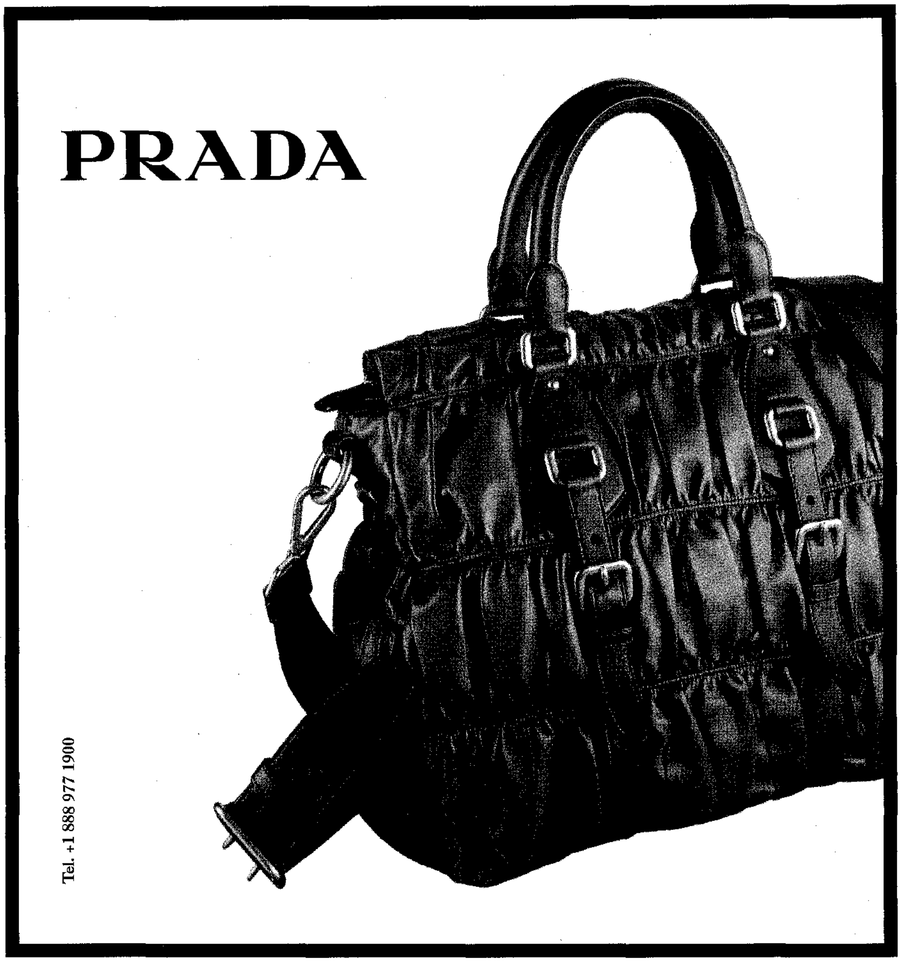


quent musical partner from the nineties; joining them are the drummer **Jimmy Cobb** and the bassist **Cameron Brown.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 1-6: The **Eddie Durham Jazz Festival** honors the underappreciated guitarist, trombonist, composer, and arranger who made significant contributions during the swing era. The soulful saxophonist **Hank Crawford** leads a quintet featuring the guitarist **Hiram Bullock.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 10-13: **James Moody,** a classic bebop saxophonist who came of age in the bands of Dizzy Gillespie, remains a consummate stylist, and a genuinely witty performer to boot.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 1-6: The trumpeter **Jon Faddis** hits notes that even dogs can't hear, but he also has deeper gifts, a fact that becomes clear when he allows his lyric sensibilities to shine through. For this engagement, his quartet is augmented by the percussionists **Abdou Mboup** and **Alioune Saye.** Aug. 9-13: The Jamaican pianist **Monty Alexander** explores the work of his fellow-countryman Bob Marley on his latest release, "Concrete Jungle."

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 1-6: **Paul Motian Trio 2000 + One** brings together the master drummer with some of his regular cohorts, including the saxophonist **Chris Potter,** and a newcomer, the vocalist **Rebecca Martin,** an understated charmer. Aug. 8-13: **Jeremy Pelt,** a young neo-hard-bop trumpeter itching to make his mark, fronts a sleek quartet. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

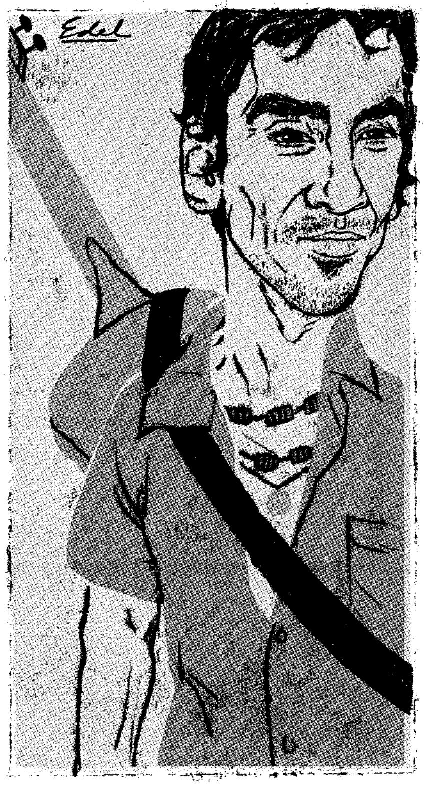
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece."** There's an exciting lurch in the style of Raphael's "Colonna Madonna" (1504-05), an altarpiece whose long-dispersed parts, most belonging to the Met, have been reconvened, along with related works by others and documentation of its star-dusted provenance (past owners have included Francis I, of France, and J. P. Morgan). Raphael turned twenty-one while painting Mary and the baby Jesus on an outdoor throne, attended by a toddler John the Baptist and four saints, with a lunette of God the Father and a predella of scenes from the Passion. The decorous manner of an early influence, Perugino, abruptly gives way, in the male saints, to rugged cues from Michelangelo. The High Renaissance has begun. Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Girodet: Romantic Rebel."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"On Photography: A Tribute to Susan Sontag."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Treasures of Sacred Maya Kings."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** This summer, the roof garden is home to four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them are "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Rembrandt and His Circle: Drawings and Prints."** Through Oct. 15. ♦ **"Anglo-Mania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion."** Through Sept. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dada,"** a large and illuminating survey of the anti-art movement that countered despair with absurdity. Through Sept. 11. ♦ **"Douglas Gordon: Timeline"** includes the artist's most famous work, the glacially paced "24 Hour *Psycho.*" Through Sept. 4. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper."** Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary extravaganza, includes a floor devoted entirely to the works of Edward Hopper. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Graffiti,"** a survey of the urban art form. Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson."** Through Aug. 13. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)



Manu Chao, at Celebrate Brooklyn!

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"We Skate Hardcore"** presents Vincent Cianni's photographs of a group of Latino in-line skaters from Williamsburg, taken over a period of eight years. Through Aug. 6. ♦ **"The High Style of Dorothy Draper."** Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Gustav Klimt: Five Paintings from the Collection of Ferdinand and Adele Block-Bauer"** includes the 1907 gold-and-silver-laced portrait of Adele, which will be joining the Neue Galerie's permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM
9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—**"Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi."** Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK
32-01 Vernon Blvd., at Broadway, Long Island City (718-956-1819)—**"Interstate: The American Road Trip."** This bicoastal collaboration focusses on distance and the methods by which it can be traversed; artists include Virginia Poundstone, Chris Hanson and Hendrika Sonnenberg, and Mark Klassen. Through Aug. 13. (Open daily, 10 to sunset.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

HOWARDENA PINDELL
Pindell is often described as a pioneer of black abstraction (hence her inclusion in the recent "Energy/Experimentation" show, at the Studio Museum in Harlem), but this is hardly the sum of her career. Photographs and words have made their way into her paintings, and texts describing autobiographical connections and context are often posted nearby. Most important is the conundrum of abstraction as "apolitical"—devoid of objects and figures and, so the argument goes, historical and political referents—an idea that Pindell confronts head on. Even paintings made up of marks or punched-out dots of colored paper can be politically charged, if only via their titles, which in recent years have increasingly addressed AIDS, sweatshop labor, and homelessness, as well as the lingering effects of slavery. Through Aug. 31. (N'Namdi, 526 W. 26th St. 212-929-6645.)

DORIS ULMANN
Ulmann's portraits of American farmers, preachers, fishermen, and tradespeople, many from the rural South, were made mostly in the late nineteen-twenties. August Sander was her contemporary, but her soft, post-pictorialist style was far more antique than his, and her pictures of the poor and the marginalized anticipate those of Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange, who would rip away her veil of misty-eyed romanticism. But if Ulmann's work appears quaint today, it retains a passionate integrity and an undeniable beauty, particularly in these warm platinum prints. She recorded a simple and vanishing way of life with genuine respect and concern. Through Sept. 23. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 212-327-1482.)

"FREEING THE LINE"
The curator Catherine de Zegher, former director of the Drawing Center, demonstrates her allegiance to line as a formal concept, but she liberates it from its traditional, staid academic role (Poussin and Ingres were seen as line men, contrasting with flamboyant colorists like Rubens and Delacroix). Line becomes a flourish, a sculptural element, something frenetically graphic and dramatic. The work here is mostly abstract and gestural. In addition to offerings from well-known boundary-pushers like Richard Tuttle, Eva Hesse, and Julie Mehretu, there are knockout examples of line unbridled in Joëlle Tuerlinckx's wire forms and Monika Grzymala's installation of black and white masking tape that clings to a wall and wraps around a column like a tenacious vine. Through Aug. 26. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

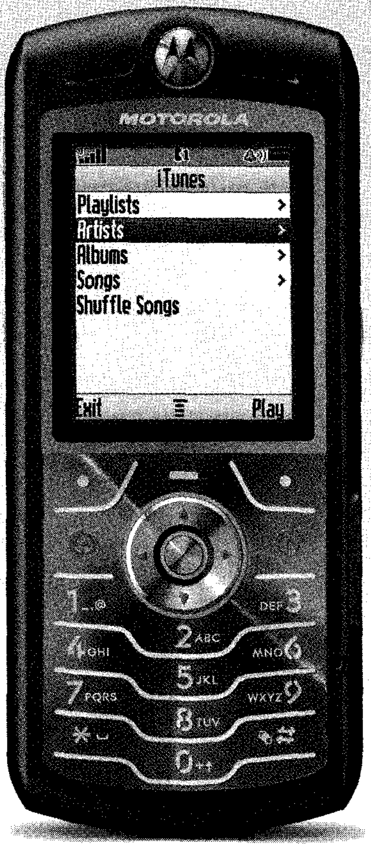
Short List

JAMES CASTLE / WALKER EVANS: Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 212-794-0550. Through Aug. 11. **JULES FEIFFER:** Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338. Through Aug. 11. **RICHARD PRINCE:** John McWhinnie at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller, 50½ E. 64th St. 212-754-5626. Through Aug. 5. **NANCY RUBINS:** Lincoln Center, Broadway at 64th St. 212-980-4575. Through Sept. 4.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

J. BENNETT FITTS
In the series of moody color photographs he calls "No Lifeguard on Duty," Fitts give us post-

EDEL RODRIGUEZ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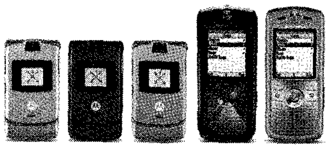

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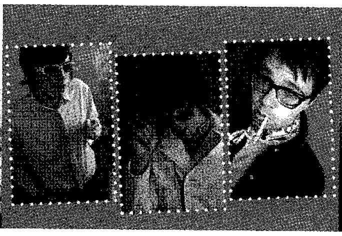

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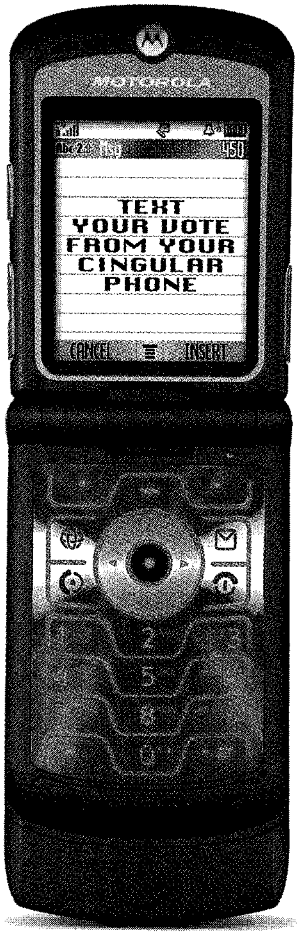

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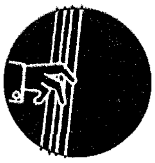
card-style views of motel and public pools in California and Florida that are empty, stagnant, paved over, or otherwise off-limits. Though not exactly Paradise Lost, it's a vision of thwarted pleasure made all the more poignant by a palette of muted sunset colors as washed out as an old beach towel. This is pointedly downbeat material for a summer show, but Fitts isn't just dragging us through the pond scum; he's inviting us to revel in those pink-tinged, baby-blue skies. Through Aug. 11. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)



JAZZ NOTES
HIS WAY

In the mid-seventies, when the brassman Warren Vaché arrived on the New York scene straight out of Rahway, New Jersey, he and his sometime associate the saxophonist Scott Hamilton became eager poster boys for traditional jazz, upholding a prewar aesthetic untouched by bebop, let alone modal or free jazz. Today Vaché's lyrical, unwaveringly melodic playing has transcended rigid notions of style and itself become classic.

His new album, **"Don't Look Back"** (Arbors), features a version of "Springsville" (here simply entitled "Spring"), a highlight of Miles Davis's 1957 masterpiece "Miles Ahead." Davis's work is notable for its sustained atmosphere of passionate introspection, and Vaché achieves a similar muted yet piercing emotional tone. Recorded with a twelve-member string section called the Scottish Ensemble, "Don't Look Back" finds Vaché gracefully playing his cornet alongside the Ensemble's quietly yearning tones. His performance on the unfashionable horn blends beautifully with elegant arrangements from the guitarist James Chirillo, Alan Barnes, the eighty-nine-year-old veteran orchestrator Bill Finegan, and Vaché himself.

On such performances as "On the Street Where You Live," "I Fall in Love Too Easily," and "Love Is for the Very Young," Vaché offers leisurely improvisations, highlighted by his huge, unruffled sound, that weave spontaneous songlike lines. In his economical approach, Vaché recalls not only Miles Davis of the fifties but another stylistic giant, Ruby Braff; like both of them, he has no use for any but the most perfect notes.

—*Steve Futterman*

MICHAEL HEIZER
Eight cast-concrete objects, all made in the late eighties, enlarge a suite of Paleolithic and Neolithic stone hand tools to monumental proportions. The smooth, simple shapes bear wonderful names like "Biface Perforator," "Prismatic Flake," and "Charmstone." Heizer is right in thinking that the objects' quiet weight and brute architectonics are more apparent at large scale; their sculptural presence is formidable. Still, with their value as human tools nullified by the gigantic upsize, and their forms forced instead toward abstract "presence," the objects feel subtly misunderstood. Through Sept. 23. (PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258.)

"ARCADIA"
Fourteen artists, including the photographers Justine Kurland, Joel Sternfeld, Elger Esser, Gonzalo Puch, and David Hilliard, explore the impulse to go back to the garden, for better or for worse. While Sternfeld's colorfully dressed picnickers at a Maypole in Tennessee appear to be enjoying a perfect countryside idyll, Kurland's gaggle of naked women and children, gathered in the clearing of a dense pine forest, seem to have discovered that Eden is not always so hospitable. Esser, Puch, and Hilliard delve into the teeming nexus of nature and artifice. And, with sly understatement, Jeff Whetstone brings the snake to the party in his overhead shot of two boys at a swimming hole. Through Aug. 25. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

"A FOUR DIMENSIONAL BEING WRITES POETRY ON A FIELD WITH SCULPTURES"
Artist-curated shows are like ontological propositions: are they conceptual extensions of the artists' work or installation "objects" in themselves? Matthew Marks's group shows organized by veteran artists (Nayland Blake and Katharina Fritsch curated in previous summers) have provided stellar examples of the genre. Charles Ray's contribution is a spare, highly eclectic gathering—a characteristically quirky but smart meditation on "how a sculpture both creates and occupies space." A skinny Giacometti figure, Mark di Suvero's cerebral wood-and-steel abstraction, the folk artist Edgar Tolson's carved reënactment of "The Fall of Man," and Jeff Wall's creepy staged photo of a nineteen-forties children's birthday party offer different conceptions of sculpture, as well as four varied models of how it works cognitively, tickling the psyche and challenging perception. Through Aug. 11. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 212-243-0200.)

Short List

WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY: Aperture, 547 W. 27th St. 212-505-5555. Through Aug. 17. **ALEXANDRE ORION:** Foley, 547 W. 27th St. 212-244-9081. Through Aug. 12. **HANS RICHTER:** Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549. Through Sept. 15. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Sept. 1. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Sept. 23. **"A RABBIT AS KING OF THE GHOSTS":** Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400. Through Aug. 11. **"SMALL WONDERS":** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600. Through Aug. 25. **"SOUTINE AND MODERN ART":** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Sept. 9.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

"FOLK"
Alan Lomax (1915-2002) is best known as a folklorist and musicologist who made field recordings, most notably of the blues, bluegrass, and gospel music that flourished in America's rural byways and backwaters. His black-and-white photographs, exhibited alongside cumbersome recording equipment, capture the faces of subjects like James Carter, a Mississippi State Penitentiary inmate whose rendition of "Poor Lazarus" made him famous when it was included in the "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack. Lomax's photographic style mimics the grand social documents of W.P.A. practitioners like Walker Evans and Berenice Abbott, but mostly it serves as an accompaniment to his recordings (which can be listened to here on headphones) and illuminates how much American culture has changed since the days before air-conditioning, when people of every race, class, and gender amused themselves by sitting on porches making music. Through Aug. 6. (Brooklyn Fire Proof, 101 Richardson St. 718-302-4702.)

DANCE

PILOBOLUS
The popular Connecticut troupe concludes its run at the Joyce with three mixed repertory programs. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Aug. 1-4 and Aug. 7-11 at 8 and Aug. 5 and Aug. 12 at 2 and 8.)

LIMÓN DANCE COMPANY
As part of its sixtieth-anniversary season, modern dance's bastion of humanism sets down at Central Park SummerStage. "Evening Songs," by Jirí Kylián, and "Etude," by the artistic director, Carla Maxwell, supplement a program of classics by the late founder: "Chaconne," the suite from "A Choreographic Offering," and Limón's signature work, "The Moor's Pavane." (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 4 at 8.)

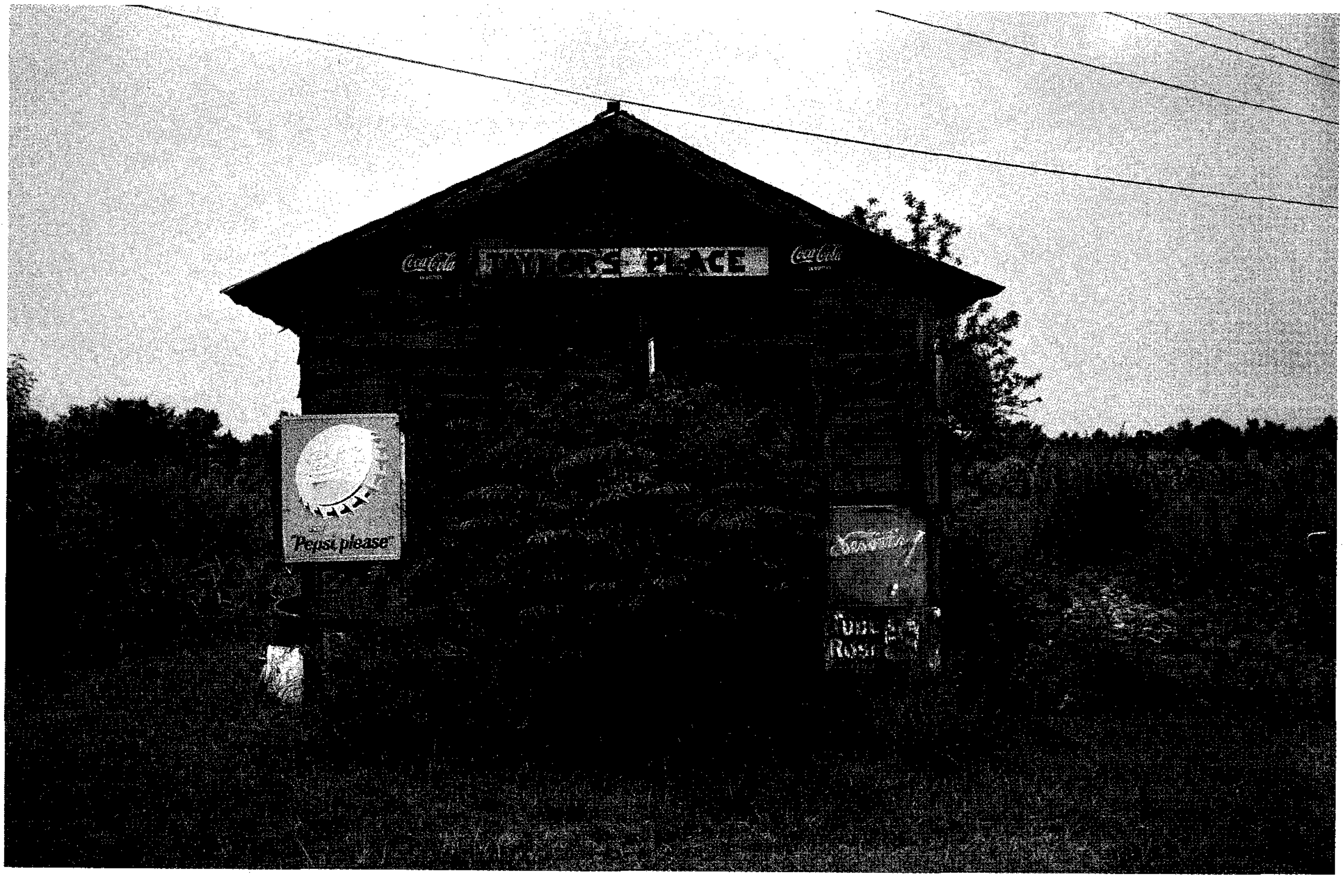
PERÚ NEGRO
The standard-bearer of Peru's African music and dance for three decades, Perú Negro didn't make its U.S. début until 2002. Since then, the troupe's visits to New York, for concerts like this free Lincoln Center presentation, have been frequent, and, with its colorful yet subdued, percussive yet easygoing performances, it has developed a strong local following. (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 5 at 8.)

"FROM MAMBO TO HIP HOP"
The filmmaker Henry Chalfant returns to the Bronx neighborhood of "Style Wars," the seminal hip-hop documentary he made with Tony Silver in 1983, but expands the scope, tracing roots in mid-century mambo culture, making an argument for continuity through interviews and clever cross-cutting of archival footage. Before the screening at Central Park SummerStage, the d.j.s Charlie Chase and Orlando Marin accompany veteran hip-hop and mambo dancers onstage; a Q. & A. follows. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 7 at 7.)

"OASIS"
To celebrate the (not quite finished) renovation of Columbus Park, in Chinatown, the Shanghai-born H. T. Chen—founder of the Asian-American dance group H. T. Chen & Dancers—and the young downtown dancer and choreographer Sharon Estacio have created site-specific works that will be performed side by side, as part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's free "Sitelines" series. Using Chinese newspapers, paper parasols, pillows, and oranges, the dancers will evoke and tweak the multiple roles of the urban park as shared space, locus of the absurd, and, ideally, haven of contemplation and beauty. (Baxter, Mulberry, Bayard, and Worth Sts. 212-219-9401. Aug. 9-10 at 7 and Aug. 11 at 12:30. Through Aug. 18.)

WE B*GIRLZ
Twenty-five years ago, a break-dancing battle staged at Lincoln Center Out of Doors was a landmark event in the mainstream recognition of hip-hop culture. Henry Chalfant and Martha Cooper, the organizers of that legendary contest, have put together an anniversary re-creation spotlighting a signal development in the past quarter century: the rise of women. The 2006 competition is for ladies only, gathering together an international roster of contending m.c.s, d.j.s, graffiti artists, and B-girl crews. (Josie Robertson Plaza, Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 10 at 5:30.)

DOUBLE TROUBLE
Lincoln Center Out of Doors presents a double bill of African-American dance. Lula Washington Dance Theatre, the venerable ensemble from Los Angeles, brings excerpts from recent work. "African Village" is an upbeat opener from a collaboration with the jazz pianist McCoy Tyner; a solo from "Tasting Muddy Waters" is bluesy; a section from "The Movement," an homage to Rosa Parks set to Ray Charles songs, marks a return to the topi-



William Christenberry's photographs of the rural South, taken between 1961 and 2005, are at Aperture through Aug. 17.

cal work Washington is known for; and a new piece set to a Paul Laurence Dunbar poem features live drumming. Reggie Wilson's Fist & Heel Performance Group offers his newest dance, "The Tale: Npinpee Nckutchie and the Tail of the Golden Dek." (Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 10 at 7:30.)

KUSUN ENSEMBLE
The Ghanaian percussionist Nii Tettey Tetteh brings his high-energy troupe and its drum-fuelled dancing to the Lincoln Center Out of Doors series. Tetteh has introduced the electric guitar and jazzy rhythms to traditional Ghanaian dance forms, like the Bawa (a harvest dance from northern Ghana) and the Bambaya (a humorous dance of the Dagomba people, which mimics shaking off sweat and insects), both of which they will perform at Josie Robertson Plaza. (Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 11 at 10:30 A.M. and 6.)

URBAN BUSH WOMEN
The sassy and soulful all-female institution brings its "Walking with Pearl . . . Africa Diaries" to Central Park SummerStage. Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, the artistic director, reads from Pearl Primus's account of her eye-opening 1949 trip to Africa while the dancers embody what Primus found and what it did to her. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 11 at 8.)

WIRE MONKEY DANCE
This Massachusetts-based gymnastic troupe started in 1998, when its founder, Saliq Francis Savage, bought some scaffolding at a yard sale. The company that developed still looks like cool kids playing on a jungle gym, but the variations have grown more sophisticated; the performers and their steel piping have colonized vertical space for contact improvisation. (Lincoln Center North Plaza. 212-546-2656. Aug. 12 at 5.)

SMUIN BALLET
Michael Smuin, a former dancer and choreographer with the American Ballet Theatre and San Francisco Ballet (where he was also co-director), has made dances for Broadway ("Sophisticated Ladies"), television, and movies ("The Cotton Club"). His company (which he founded in 1994) brings two new works to the Joyce. "Bluegrass/Slyde" is an Appalachian-inspired romp set to the twanging notes of a banjo and bass, and the ambitious, emotionally weighty "Symphony of Psalms" is set to Stravinsky's great choral work; the program is rounded out by a Sinatra tribute, "Fly Me to the Moon." (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Aug. 14-15 at 8. Through Aug. 19.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
This week marks the triumphant return of Trey McIntyre Project to the Pillow, where McIntyre created a splash last year by combining a breezy neoclassicism with personality. The shapely, seamless dances range from an abstract contemporary ballet to a bossa-nova number to a bluegrass odyssey. At the Doris Duke Studio Theatre, Karole Armitage, dance's much fêted prodigal daughter, shows two strong recent abstract works: the athletic "In This Dream That Dogs Me" (2005), in which limbs flick the air like a calligrapher's brush, and the dreamlike "Time Is the Echo of an Axe Within a Wood" (2004). Then Shen Wei Dance Arts commands the main stage, giving the Northeast its first look at "Re-," the eagle-eyed Shen's latest grafting of dance onto visual art. This time, the set piece takes the form of a Tibetan mandala, handcrafted from countless scraps of blue and white paper, and the score consists of Buddhist chants. The company also presents excerpts from last year's relentlessly energetic, arrestingly original "Map." At the Doris Duke, a distinctly downtown sensibility prevails as the hip choreographer Richard Move and one fine pickup company dance three of Move's signature chamber pieces and the première of his latest multimedia fantasia, "Toward the Delights of the Exquisite Corpse," with a sound score by Hilton Als (a writer for this magazine) and video by Charles Atlas. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 2-13. For complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org. Through Aug. 26.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
The festival's fortieth season is more ambitious than ever; here are some highlights. Aug. 4-5 at 8: Osmo Vänskä, a disciplinarian of unfailing musical instincts, leads the Mostly Mozart Orchestra in works by Beethoven (the Violin Concerto, with Sergey Khachatryan making his New York début) and Frank Martin along with Mozart's "Haffner" Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 5 at 10:30: "A Little Night Music," the festival's hugely successful series of cabaret-style events, begins its third year with a late-night recital by the violinist Gidon Kremer and members of his young Kremerata Baltica ensemble, who perform string quartets by Shostakovich and Gubaidulina along with Mozart's Viola Quintet in G Minor. (Kaplan Penthouse.) ♦ Aug. 6 at 5 and Aug. 7 at 8: Kremer and his colleagues offer two chamber-orchestra concerts that feature short works by Nyman and Schnittke along with all five of Mozart's violin concertos. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 9 at 8 and Aug. 11-12 at 7: Mostly Mozart's music director, Louis Langrée, no stranger to the great opera houses of Europe, conducts his first opera at the festival—"Zaide," in a new production by Peter Sellars, with sets by George Tsypin, accompaniment by the formidable period-instrument group Concerto Köln, and Hyunah Yu and Norman Shankle, among others, in the leading roles. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St.) ♦ Aug. 10 at 10:30: Christian Zacharias, a renowned pianist who balances analytic precision with spontaneous poetry, offers a late-night concert of works by Mozart and Ravel. (Kaplan Penthouse.) ♦ Aug. 11-12 at 8: Zacharias returns to lead the festival orchestra in the "Posthorn" Serenade and the Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor, doubling on keyboard. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 11-12 at 10:30: Concerto Köln teams up with the Istanbul ensemble Sarband for two programs that examine the clash between Mozart's "Oriental" works and the

reality of Levantine music, in which such pieces as the Overture to "The Abduction from the Seraglio" mingle with music by Gluck, Süssmayr, and Sultan Murad III. (Allen Room, Rose Hall.) ♦ Aug. 15 at 10:30: Emanuel Ax offers a selection of Mozart piano works, with the young pianist Orion Weiss as his guest. (212-721-6500. For full schedule, see www.lincolncenter.org.)

SUMMERGARDEN
Every summer, two art forms merge in the Museum of Modern Art's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, where listeners can sample contemporary music from around the world while basking in the ambience of sculptures by Calder, Picasso, and Matisse. The final classical program, a slate of string quartets offered by members of the New Juilliard Ensemble, is a truly eclectic concert that features not only works by Lena Auerbach, Carl Vine, and Tigran Ayvazyan but also the world première of "Eye in the Sky," a Philip K. Dick-inspired work by the notoriously dissonant downtown composer Elliott Sharp. (11 W. 53rd St. Aug. 6 at 8. No tickets required.)

OUT OF TOWN

BRIDGEHAMPTON CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
The flutist Marya Martin's elegant Hamptons festival, full of first-rate musicians, continues with a program of works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich (the Piano Quintet), and Tchaikovsky (the Piano Trio) that features the pianist Andrew Russo and the violinist Colin Jacobsen. (Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. 631-537-6368. Aug. 2 at 7:30. For full schedule, see www.bcmf.org.)

TANGLEWOOD
A mere selection of the concerts offered by the supreme music festival of the summer. Aug. 2-3 at 8:30: The transcendent virtuoso Gidon Kremer brings his Kremerata Baltica ensemble to Boston's musical duchy for two programs featuring Mozart's complete violin concertos and the "Serenata Notturna." ♦ Aug. 4 at 8:30: Yo-Yo Ma is the soloist not only in Haydn's Cello Concerto in C Major but also in the world première of a concerto by the dazzlingly eclectic composer Osvaldo Golijov, in a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert that also features Elgar's "Enigma" Variations; Donald Runnicles conducts. ♦ Aug. 5 at 8:30: Seiji Ozawa returns to his old stomping grounds to lead the B.S.O. in one of his favorites—Mahler's "Resurrection" Symphony, with the soprano Heidi Grant Murphy, the mezzo-soprano Nathalie Stutzmann, and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus. ♦ Aug. 11 at 8:30: Harry Bicket conducts a festive Baroque concert with the B.S.O. that features Bach's Third Orchestral Suite and the Violin Concerto in E Major (with Corey Cerovsek) along with a selection of Handel arias (with Sarah Connolly) and the "Royal Fireworks Music." Fireworks follow the concert. ♦ Aug. 13 at 2:30: Another distinguished guest ensemble—the Philadelphia Orchestra—comes to Lenox with its music director, Christoph Eschenbach, to perform symphonies by Beethoven (No. 8) and Tchaikovsky (No. 5). (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200. For full schedule, see www.bso.org.)

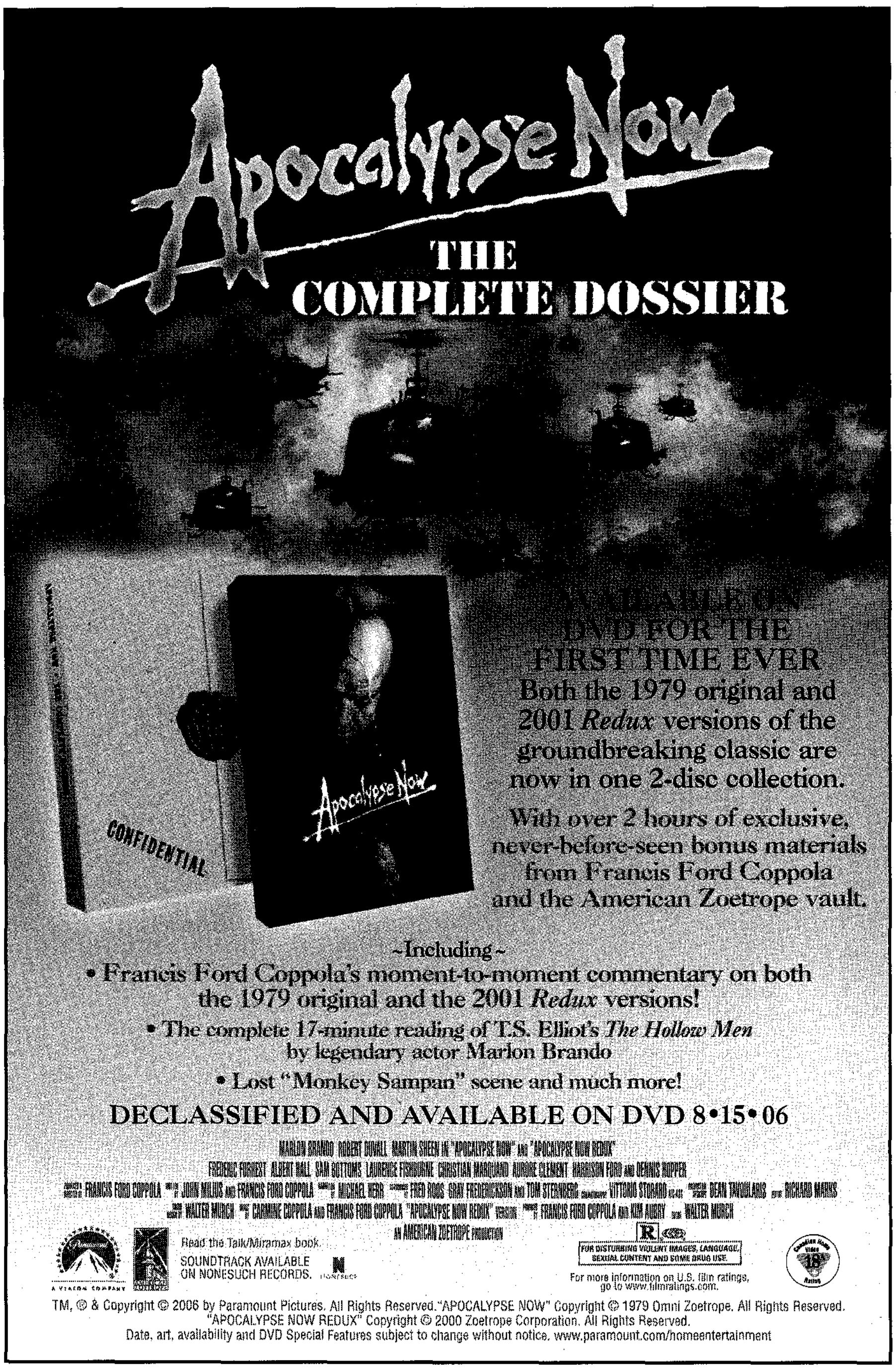
GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
Aug. 3 at 8 and Aug. 12 and Aug. 15 at 1:30: The American composer Stephen Hartke steps into the operatic realm with **"The Greater Good,"** a treatment of the Maupassant story "Boule de Suif," a bitter tale about the manipulation of a good-hearted prostitute during the Franco-Prussian War. The world-première production features Caroline Worra in the leading role; Stewart Robertson conducts. ♦ Aug. 4 and Aug. 10 at 8 and Aug. 7 and Aug. 13 at 1:30: The mezzo-soprano Katharine Goeldner plays the ingénue Rosina in Rossini's deathless **"Barber of Seville,"** in a production led by David Angus. ♦ Aug. 5-6 at 1:30 and Aug. 12 at 8: Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Pirates of Penzance,"** featuring Megan Monaghan, Anthony Laciura, and Chad A. Johnson; Gary Thor Wedow. ♦ Aug. 5 and Aug. 11 at 8 and Aug. 8 and Aug. 14 at 1:30: Despite its reputation as a progressive house, Glimmerglass is only just now getting to Janáček: a much anticipated production of **"Jenůfa"** by Jonathan Miller features the charismatic American soprano Maria Kanyova in the title role; Robertson. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
Aug. 4 at 8: The dynamic Trio Solisti offers a classically Viennese program of piano trios by Haydn, Schubert (No. 1 in B-Flat Major), and Brahms (the impassioned Trio in B Major, Op. 8) in the Spanish Courtyard. ♦ Aug. 11 at 8: John Musto, a superb pianist and composer equally gifted at vocal and instrumental music, plays Bach's Fifth French Suite as well as two of his own compositions—"The Book of Uncommon Prayer" (featuring such esteemed singers as the soprano Amy Burton and the baritone Philip Cutlip) and the Sextet for Clarinet, Strings, and Piano (with the Music from Copland House Ensemble). ♦ Aug. 12 at 8: Donald Runnicles brings down the curtain on this year's festival, leading the Orchestra of St. Luke's in John Adams's vibrant Chamber Symphony and two works of Mozart, the Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major (with Ingrid Fliter) and the "Jupiter" Symphony. (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252. For full schedule, see www.caramoor.org.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The pianist Melvin Chen sits in with the Penderecki String Quartet for music by Mozart, Janáček (the Quartet No. 1, "The Kreutzer Sonata"), and Franck (the Piano Quintet). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 5 at 6:30. For full schedule, see www.musicmountain.org.)

NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL
A modern masterpiece—Takemitsu's "A Way a Lone"—will be the quiet center of a program offered by the Tokyo String Quartet that also features quartets by Mozart (in D Major, K. 575) and Brahms. (Norfolk, Conn. 860-542-3000. Aug. 5 at 8. For full schedule, see www.yale.edu/norfolk.)

MARLBORO FESTIVAL
Some twenty-seven of the world's foremost musicians—and a passel of their very talented students—offer performances of works from the German clas-



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sical tradition. The summer's final programs are announced a week in advance at www.marlboromusic.org. (Marlboro, Vt. 802-254-2394. Aug. 5 and Aug. 11-12 at 8:30 and Aug. 6 and Aug. 13 at 2:30.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
Aug. 6 at 3: The exuberant St. Lawrence String Quartet offers works by three of this year's anniversary composers: Mozart (the first "Prussian" Quartet, in D Major), Schumann, and Shostakovich (the commanding Quartet No. 3 in F Major). ♦ Aug. 13 at 3: In a refreshingly non-Mozartean event, the venerable Tokyo String Quartet performs quartets by Beethoven (in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4), Webern (the coruscating Five Movements, Op. 5), and Brahms. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8172. For full schedule, see www.maverickconcerts.org.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL: "FRANZ LISZT AND HIS WORLD"
The great shadow composer of the nineteenth century—whose music influenced almost all of the great musicians of his time—is the subject of Leon Botstein's latest festival of concerts and symposia at Bard College. A selection follows. Aug. 11 at 8:30: As Liszt was also the century's most prized pianist, the opening program will include the pianists Valentina Lisitsa and Peter Orth performing such masterworks as "Am Grabe Richard Wagners" and "Réminiscences de Don Juan"; a selection of songs and choral pieces will also be offered. ♦ Aug. 12 at 8: In the first concert with the American Symphony Orchestra, Botstein leads not only the limpid Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Arnaldo Cohen) and a selection of rarely performed tone poems ("Hunnenschlacht," anyone?) but also Heinrich Ernst's even rarer Concerto Pathétique (with the violinist Alexander Markov). ♦ Aug. 13 at 5:30: In a show of range, Botstein conducts "Grand Opera Before Wagner," a potpourri that includes arias and ensembles by such composers as Auber, Meyerbeer, and Bellini, sung by the soprano Nicole Cabell and the tenor Philippe Castagner, among others, along with the Bard Festival Chorale. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7900. For full schedule, see www.fishercenter.bard.edu.)

MOVIES OPENING

ACCEPTED
A comedy, directed by Steve Pink, in which a high-school student (Justin Long) who is not accepted at any college decides to start his own. Opening Aug. 11. (In wide release.)

BARNYARD
An animated comedy, directed by Steve Oedekerk, about a cow who takes over the farm. Opening Aug. 4. (In wide release.)

BOYNTON BEACH CLUB
In this romantic comedy, directed by Susan Seidelman, residents of a retirement community find love after bereavement. Starring Joseph Bologna and Brenda Vaccaro. Opening Aug. 4. (Paris.)

THE BRIDESMAID
Claude Chabrol directed this drama, starring Benoît Magimel and Laura Smet, about a man who falls in love with his wife's maid of honor. In French. Opening Aug. 4. (Angelika Film Center.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Aug. 11. (62nd and Broadway and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE DESCENT
A British horror film, directed by Neil Marshall, about cave explorers who get trapped with monsters. Opening Aug. 4. (In wide release.)

HALF NELSON
Ryan Fleck directed this drama, about a middle-school teacher (Ryan Gosling) with a drug habit. Opening Aug. 11. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

HAMILTON
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 11. (Anthology Film Archives.)

LUNACY
An animated triptych, based on stories by Edgar Allan Poe, directed by Jan Svankmajer. In Czech. Opening Aug. 9. (Film Forum.)

MY COUNTRY, MY COUNTRY
A documentary, directed by Laura Poitras, about a Sunni doctor who runs for office in Iraq. Opening Aug. 4. (Cinema Village.)

QUINCEAÑERA
Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland directed this drama about a fourteen-year-old girl who gets pregnant. Opening Aug. 4. (In wide release.)

STEP UP
A drama about a juvenile delinquent (Channing Tatum) who finds himself drawn to the world of dance. Opening Aug. 11. (In wide release.)

TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY
A comedy about a NASCAR driver, starring Will Ferrell, Amy Adams, and Sacha Baron Cohen, and directed by Adam McKay. Opening Aug. 4. (In wide release.)

WORLD TRADE CENTER
Oliver Stone's version of the events at Ground Zero, starring Nicolas Cage. Opening Aug. 9. (In wide release.)

ZOOM
An adventure comedy about an ex-superhero (Tim Allen) who teaches a straggly bunch of kids his secrets. Directed by Peter Hewitt. Opening Aug. 11. (In wide release.)

NOW PLAYING

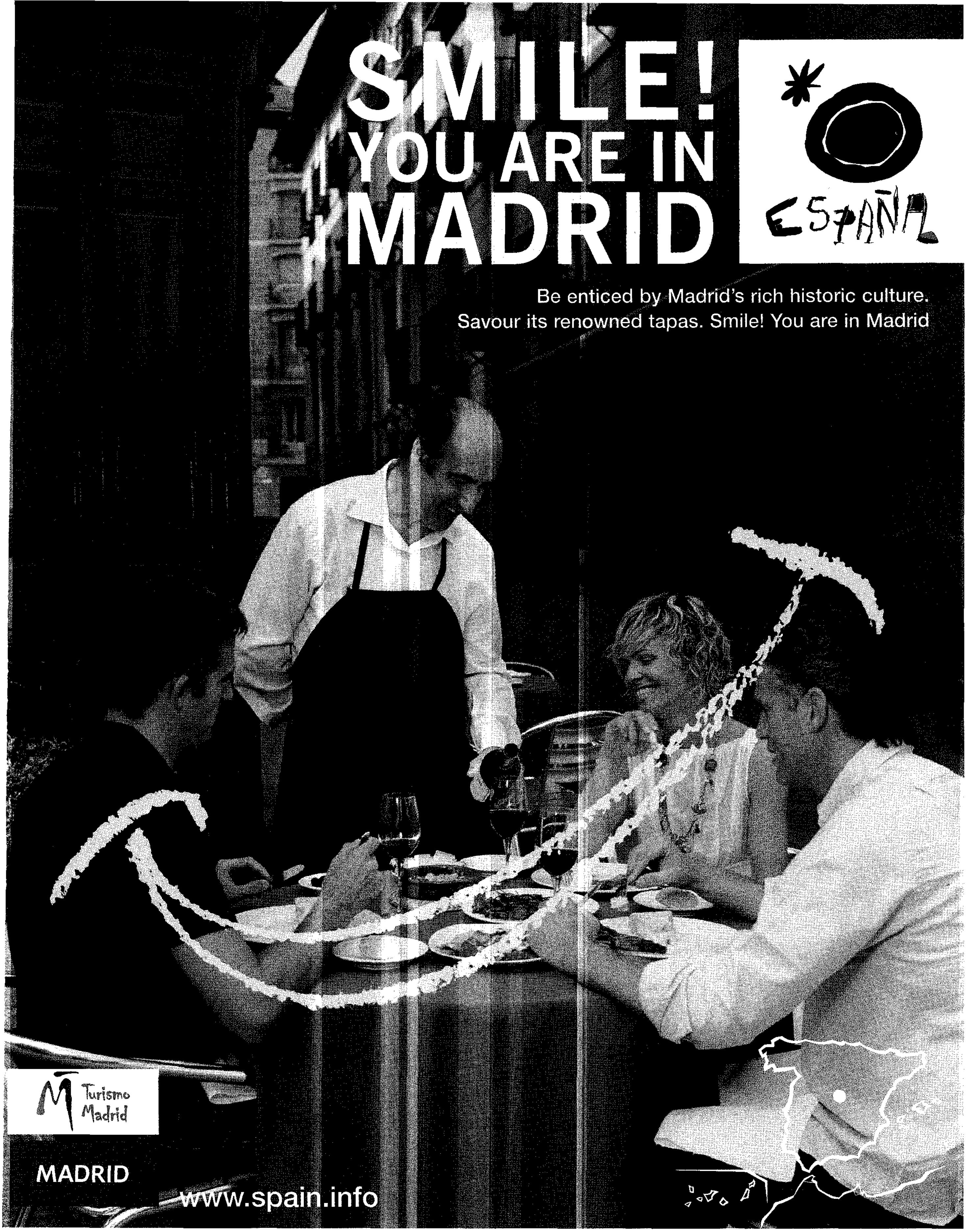
CLERKS II
A decade after Kevin Smith's breakout low-budget hit, Dante (Brian O'Halloran) and Randal (Jeff Anderson) are still at the Quick Stop convenience store, but when it burns down Dante says, without a trace of irony, "The Lord did something with that place: He smited that hellhole." They may not have grown up, but they've found God, and they won't stop talking about it. The drug dealers Jay and Silent Bob (Jason Mewes and Smith) are back, too, but Jay now wears a "Got Christ?" T-shirt and peddles a pocket-size Bible along with his nickel bags. Like the 1994 original, the sequel involves endless adolescent potty-mouthing, riffs on pop culture (now blended with Biblical exegesis), and grotesque sexual antics. This time, there's bestiality—euphemized as "inter-species erotica"—as well as a human love story involving Dante, a control freak (Smith's wife, Jennifer Schwalbach), and his boss (Rosario Dawson). Smith clearly has something in mind—a personal Christianity that governs behavior but gives free rein to the expression of fantasy—but he doesn't bring it to life onscreen. The deadpan spontaneity and droll naïveté are gone, replaced by a televangelist's hyperactive salesmanship.—*Richard Brody* (In wide release.)

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
The plotting is conventional, and the movie never goes below the surface, but, still, what a surface! Bright and crisp and funny, "Prada" turns dish into the kind of dazzling commercial entertainment that Hollywood used to turn out in the days of George Cukor and Stanley Donen. In a triumphantly witty performance, Meryl Streep, never raising her voice, is Miranda Priestly, the terrifying editor of a thick fashion monthly; young Anne Hathaway is the Cinderella figure, who enters the office as Miranda's assistant wearing drab multi-blend sweaters and woollen skirts and gets transformed, after much hazing and many breathless errands, into a fashion princess; and Stanley Tucci, as Miranda's acidulous but kindly second-in-command, teaches the heroine the facts of life. Jess Gonchor's production design features the chaste beiges and whites of impervious authority—even the cars have a slinky insolence—and Patricia Field assembled the clothes (by Blass, Dolce & Gabbana, Galliano, and others). Written by Aline Brosh McKenna, who toughened up Lauren Weisberger's trivially self-regarding 2003 best-seller, and directed, with the right mixture of satire and heartbreak, by David Frankel.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
FROM THE ASHES

On Aug. 7, Central Park SummerStage will show Henry Chalfant's wonderful documentary film "From Mambo to Hip Hop," about the social changes, and the accompanying changes in dance, in the South Bronx between the fifties and the eighties. By the end of the fifties, this neighborhood, formerly Jewish, was mostly black and Puerto Rican, and a hotbed of mambo. Bar Mitzvah halls had become Latin ballrooms. Tito Puente played his timbales; Celia Cruz sang. But by the seventies that party was over. Drugs and gangs had arrived. Buildings burned down. Everyone who could leave did so. Among those who couldn't, a pissed-off phoenix arose—hip-hop—and a whole new story began. The film shows B-boys stringing lights in charred, abandoned buildings, where the dancing often took the form of gang warfare, part of the curse and, as art, part of the cure. The SummerStage screening will be followed by a Q. & A. including, among others, Chalfant and PopMaster Fabel (né Jorge Pabón), who, as a cute, astonishingly talented little boy, was one of the original members of the Rock Steady Crew.

—*Joan Acocella*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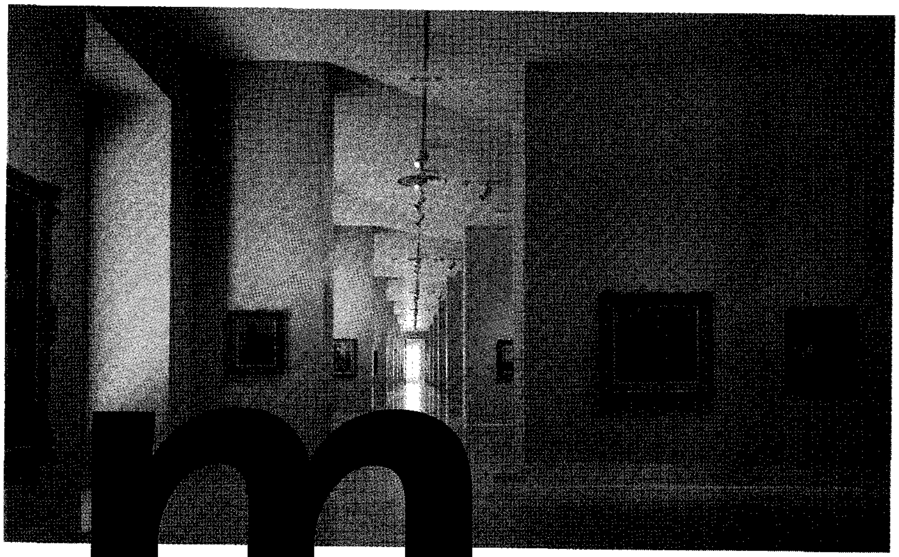


m terpieces of Madrid

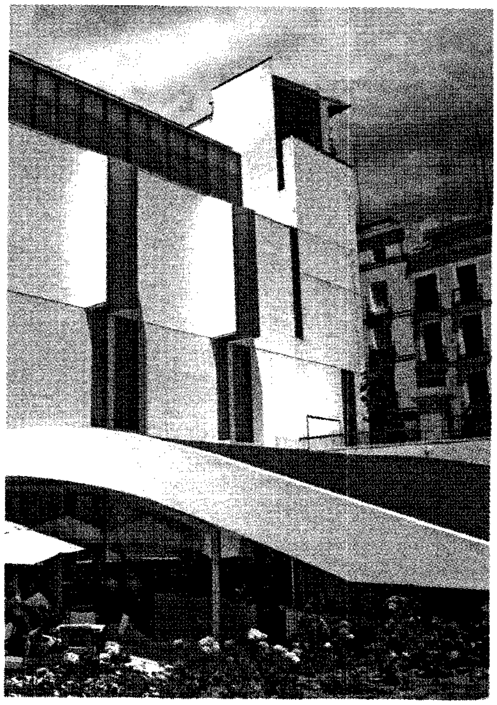
The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 8 Paseo del Prado, is open from 10 A.M. to 7 P.M. Tuesday through Sunday. During July and August, the temporary exhibits will remain open until 11 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, go to museothyssen.org.

Unique among Madrid's Golden Triangle museums, which include the Prado and Reina Sofia, the **Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza** stands out for its single-minded point of view. Its core collection, acquired by Spain in 1993, is made up of some eight hundred paintings that once belonged to the industrialist Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza. The Baron's collection is presented chronologically, beginning with an emotion-filled portrait of St. Peter by Simone Martini, painted in the early fourteenth century. Each piece further draws you into the bold intelligence of the collector, who once claimed that his main criterion for buying a painting was whether he enjoyed looking at it.

Among the many Impressionist and Post-Impressionist works that captured the Baron's gaze were portraits by Manet, Morisot, and Degas, along with landscapes by Monet, Gauguin, and Van Gogh. His love of color is evident in selections by Vlaminck, Braque, and Kandinsky. The collection allows its viewers to travel from the Renaissance humanism of Messina's "Portrait of a Man" to the solitude of Edward Hopper's "Hotel Room." By the time visitors arrive at Lucian Freud's portrait of the Baron himself, they will appreciate his contemplative mien.

The Palacio de Villahermosa, a neoclassical-style structure once used by the Prado for temporary exhibitions, was renovated by Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate Rafael Moneo to give the artwork a warm setting that is at once modern and stately. A wing added in 2004, displays the collection of the Baron's widow, Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza, which includes Rodin sculptures commissioned by the Baron's grandfather.

This summer, visitors to the museum will delve into the mind of another great collector in **From Cranach to Monet: Masterpieces from the Pérez Simón Collection**, through September 10th. The quality of the works suggests that the Baron had an alter ego in the Mexican businessman Juan Antonio Pérez Simón, but the latter's choices were expressly guided by love of female beauty and nature. Thus, among the fifty-seven paintings, you'll see the grace of a nursing mother in Lucas Cranach the Elder's "Charity" and the sheer sensuality of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Venus Verticordia," as well as the brilliance of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist landscapes.



TOP: ©JAVIER AZURMENDI; BOTTOM: ©CARLOS DOMINGUEZ/CORBIS

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With the mop-haired, spaniel-eyed Adrian Grenier, whose boring good nature as the heroine's boyfriend makes us long to get back to the wickedness of the office.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 7/10 & 17/06.) (In wide release.)

HAMILTON

A minor miracle. Matthew Porterfield's first film, barely an hour long, made for a pittance in his native Baltimore with nonprofessional actors on 16-mm. film, is one of the most original, moving, and accomplished American independent films in recent years. The story alone is touchingly simple—a teenage mother, about to leave town for a month, wants her baby's young father to pay her a visit—but Porterfield's genius is revealed above all in the way he brings it to life. Exquisitely composed, unfolding gradually, suffused with light and color, his tender yet unsentimental images convey the graceful rhythms and quiet sorrows of young lives on hold. Porterfield is a master of time: here, an eight-minute trip takes eight minutes, but its progress is rich in visual epiphanies. The film builds to an unlikely, wondrous chase, and leaves the viewer astonished, hungry for more, and eagerly anticipating what Porterfield, who is still in his twenties, will do next.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives.)

has an amusing bit as a film critic without hope or enthusiasm. At least he won't have to review this movie.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

A charming, independently made family comedy about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. His seven-year-old daughter Olive (Abigail Breslin) is entering a Little Miss Sunshine contest; his stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), has a private dream in which he is a Nietzschean Übermensch; his wife's brother (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Is winning everything? The writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, narrowly avoid the family-comedy pitfalls of whimsy and mush, but Arndt has a good ear for domestic irritations and the acting is just tough enough to keep us off balance. With Alan Arkin and Toni Collette as the family's realists.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

TABLES FOR TWO
TURKS & FROGS TRIBECA

458 Greenwich St. (212-966-4774)—Brother acts are winsome but notoriously volatile—for every genial Wilson, there's a whiny Gallagher or a warring Teitelbaum. So, when the Çakir boys set to work on Turks & Frogs Tribeca, the restaurant version of their popular West Village wine bar and antique shop, they took care to preserve the division of labor that has served them so well a few blocks north. Orhan does the food. Osman does the furniture. (The grub is Turkish; the fittings are mostly French. Both are for sale.) A cobalt glass *nazar boncuk* dangles above the cash register, insuring continued prosperity for all.

Judging from the ratio of BlackBerry checks to smoke breaks, the crowd is more American than Euro, but whatever rivalries exist are strictly within the Turks & Frogs family. "They don't do this at your place, do they?" a bartender at the Tribeca branch recently said to a West Village regular, before tossing a bottle of Chenin Blanc into the air, like a club. Orhan says that "all Turkish people, we like red," which explains the signature tomato-colored walls. Warm receptions are apparently also a national hallmark. "Hello, I am Mete. What are you reading?" one employee said, coming around from behind the bar to offer a handshake. A tasty loaf of flat bread studded with caraway seeds appears immediately; later, one might receive a shot of Turkish liquor called "lion's milk." Distilled from anise, it looks white and tastes black.

But first: *mücver, lebni, harem salatasi!* The array of salads and appetizers, pre-made examples of which the waiters bring around on a big tray, makes you want to sing. It's possible to go wrong (the smoked eggplant, for instance, is more slimy than savory), but the yogurts are uniformly tangy, and the hummus benefits from a generous dose of garlic. *Manti*, tricorn-shaped dumplings, are stuffed with mint and lamb and dunked in yogurt; the effect is both fluffy and dense, in the way of Styrofoam peanuts. Like snow, the dish has a fleeting beauty: upon first forkful, paprika seeps across its creamy white surface, giving the whole concoction a weird orange tint. But the portion is huge, and, as a smart Turk or Frog knows, that's a surefire way to please a Yank. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $14-$25.)

—*Lauren Collins*

LADY IN THE WATER

M. Night Shyamalan's new fantasy film is one of those catastrophes in which the fiction-making is so strained and feeble that it seems little more than an arrogant delusion. Some sort of translucent goddess-nymph-mermaid (Bryce Dallas Howard), known as a narf, turns up in the swimming pool of an apartment complex outside of Philadelphia, makes an alliance with the building's sad-sack super (Paul Giamatti), and enlists the sympathies of the tenants. After many showers, she tells them their destinies; in return, they try to return her to her native "Blue World." As people stand around explaining to one another what they think is going on, a devil-dog creature, a scrunt, emerges from the woods to menace everyone. Enacted in mediocre cement-block settings, the fantasy never develops any beauty or even a pulse. Giamatti, however, gives it his all; it's a desperately sincere performance. Shyamalan himself plays a writer living in the building whose unfinished book, the narf tells him, will save the world. And Bob Balaban

JOSH COCHRAN

MIAMI VICE

Michael Mann, returning to the sunshine-bright and overripe material of the old TV show (he was executive producer of the series), hasn't hidden the sun, exactly, but the general tone is darker, dankier, dirtier, and much more violent. The euphemisms of television have vanished—the blood hits the wall with a splat—and the material is now grim and self-important. Colin Farrell is Detective Sonny Crockett, and Jamie Foxx is Detective Lieutenant Ricardo Tubbs. These are serious fellows; they don't engage in debonair lounge-lizard repartee—they hardly engage at all (Farrell is sullen and withdrawn). Pretending to be big-time drug transporters, the boys travel to Haiti and Colombia and insinuate themselves into a drug-smuggling ring. Mann's narrative method is terse, abrupt, and fragmentary, and his dialogue consists mainly of cop-and-drug-dealer jargon spit out of the corner of someone's mouth. The movie is hard to follow, but it has its moments of licentious pleasure, especially when Colin Farrell and Gong Li, who plays the

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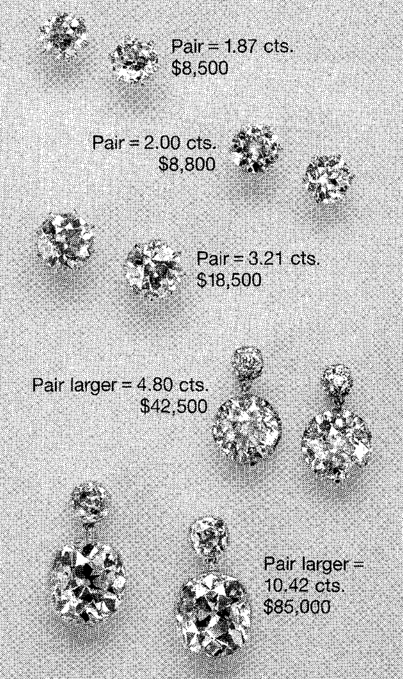

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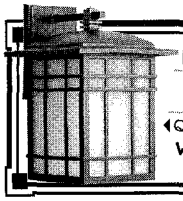

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drug kingpin's mistress, take off for Cuba, speeding across the Caribbean in a twin-engine Super Cat.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

MONSTER HOUSE
Directed by Gil Kenan and produced by Robert Zemeckis and Steven Spielberg, this animated horror film, about a group of kids terrorized by a house that gobbles up all who pass by, has the scares and the wit of a great amusement-park ride. The motion-capture technology that Zemeckis developed for "The Polar Express" (the actors are filmed and then exaggeratedly computer-animated) is even better suited to this kind of creepy story. The screenplay is a boilerplate kid's film (the adults are clueless, and it's up to the children to save the day), but the snappy dialogue pops with a child's-eye view of adult conversation, and the thrills—and there are many—are wonderfully scary; they bring a smile after the fright. With voice work by Steve Buscemi, Jon Heder, and, as the monster house, the belching, motion-captured face of Kathleen Turner.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

NO DIRECTION HOME
The historical and musical importance of Martin Scorsese's epic 2005 documentary, about Bob Dylan's rise in the early nineteen-sixties to folk-music idol and plugged-in poet-hero, is self-evident. The film's great pathos, however, is as much a product of its flaws as of its virtues. Dylan, born in 1941, and Scorsese, born in 1942, were young men in Greenwich Village at the same time. Yet Dylan became a cultural icon while Scorsese was still an N.Y.U. student, and Scorsese, when he later took his place in the wider world, did so as a champion of a bygone age: his best films feature jazz, Martinis, and characters belonging to or nostalgic for the pre-rock era. Scorsese knew nothing of the Village scene where Dylan played, and the film's rich array of film clips and interviews, put together with a conventional television-biography technique, may as well have been about ancient times and distant places. This conservative, hagiographic documentary is both a wistful, deferential tribute to the forever-young Dylan and a sad admission that Scorsese, in effect, has always been old.—*R.B.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 6.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST
This is the second part of a trilogy, Disney having decided that there were dense thematic issues, not to mention narrative niceties, that could not be constrained within a single "Pirates" film; any financial consideration was, of course, entirely secondary. Once again, we accompany Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) as he pursues his fate—or the needle of his compass—across the waters. Keira Knightley resumes her romantic role, as does Orlando Bloom, although his presence is not exactly strong enough to rip a hole in the screen. The director, Gore Verbinski, may marshal the action into some kind of order, but the show is truly run (and strung out) by the special effects; why else would a writhing sea monster, having munched on one ship, come back for a second helping? If the film works, it is largely because of Depp, whose performance owes more and more to Mary Pickford and less to Douglas Fairbanks. Depp continues to dominate the proceedings, aided in this instance by Bill Nighy, who—together with his animated beard—breathes life into the deceased Davy Jones.—*Anthony Lane* (7/24/06) (In wide release.)

A SCANNER DARKLY
The director Richard Linklater digitally photographed Philip K. Dick's 1977 futuristic-nightmare novel as a movie with actors, then turned the images into animation, adding oscillating colors and shadows. The effect is to make the material—with its paranoid fears about mind-destroying drugs—even more menacing and strange. Keanu Reeves is the dissolving hero, a narc who takes on the personality of an addict; Robert Downey, Jr., is his weirdly overexplicit sidekick; Woody Harrelson is a hysterical goof; and Winona Ryder is a user who may be playing a double game. Some of the movie is startlingly funny, but it luxuriates in a kind of hip despair that may wear out a viewer well before the end.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SCOOP
In Woody Allen's latest, Woody is a cut-rate magician known as the Great Splendini, and Scarlett Johansson, who is charming, is his protégée, Sondra, a college-newspaper reporter who gets a tip on a big story from a dead journalist (Ian McShane) conjured up by Splendini. The conceit is barely tolerable, but it gets the movie under way, and Woody and Scarlett are fitfully amusing as an unlikely pair of sleuths who run around London quarrelling and putting people on in posh houses and private clubs. To enjoy it, however, you have to love Woody's fumbling, stumbling delivery, with its many hesitations and sudden explosions of worry or distaste. At the age of seventy, he's certainly not hiding his crotchets. Hugh Jackman plays a powerful man who may or may not have committed a string of murders.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SUPERMAN RETURNS
After a lengthy interlude, the Man of Steel is back. His zeal to cleanse the world of evil remains as unswerving as ever, as does his belief that the addition of eyeglasses constitutes a deep disguise. In Bryan Singer's film, he is played by Brandon Routh, who appears to be under instructions to deliver his finest impersonation of Christopher Reeve. Also present are Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth), who has gained a child but lost much of her zip and wit, and Lex Luthor (Kevin Spacey), whose plan to hatch a new landmass made of crystal seems unwieldy even by his standards. The story jerks and drags along, with holes where the funny lines are meant to be, plus a number of enigmas (the true father of Lois's son, for instance) that come across as merely confusing. Nevertheless, comic-book fans will gorge themselves on the set pieces and on the now familiar sight of Spacey playing the devil—silken of voice, bare of morals, and infinitely bored.—*A.L.* (7/3/06) (In wide release.)

13 TZAMETI
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

THE THREE MUSKETEERS
Undiluted delight. The scale is lavish, the story clearly told, and Douglas Fairbanks is the darting-est of D'Artagnans, energizing every scene he's in not just with his unpredictable agility and swiftness but also with an italicized ardor—which he often, wisely, plays for laughs. This D'Artagnan's favorite expression is "Marvellous!" and Fairbanks is pretty marvellous, too, whether he's romping over rooftops with his true love, Constance, or engaging the evil Milady de Winter in a fight for the queen's jewels that turns into an apache dance. Fred Niblo directed. Released in 1921. Silent.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Aug. 10.)

YOU, ME AND DUPREE
Kate Hudson and the heavy-browed Matt Dillon, who don't really belong together as actors, get married; the newlyweds take into their house a life-loving bum, played by Owen Wilson, who proceeds to wreck the union. The basic premise is slightly offensive: the Wilson character is presented as a test of everyone's humanity, but he's actually a pain in the neck whom anyone in their right mind, and especially newlyweds, would immediately throw out. Wilson runs around bare-assed and is meant to be lovable, which may be a jerk's last illusion. The direction by Anthony and Joe Russo is slightly off in every scene—perhaps because the material never made sense in the first place. With Michael Douglas as Hudson's sourpuss father.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

JOHN TUCKER MUST DIE: In wide release. **LITTLE MAN:** In wide release. **MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND:** In wide release. **WHO KILLED THE ELECTRIC CAR?:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—Selected screenings. "Kino Summer Series." Aug. 2 at 7:30: "Time Regained" (1999, Raúl Ruiz; in French). ♦

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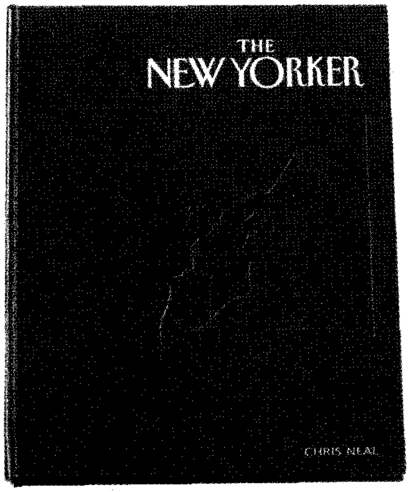

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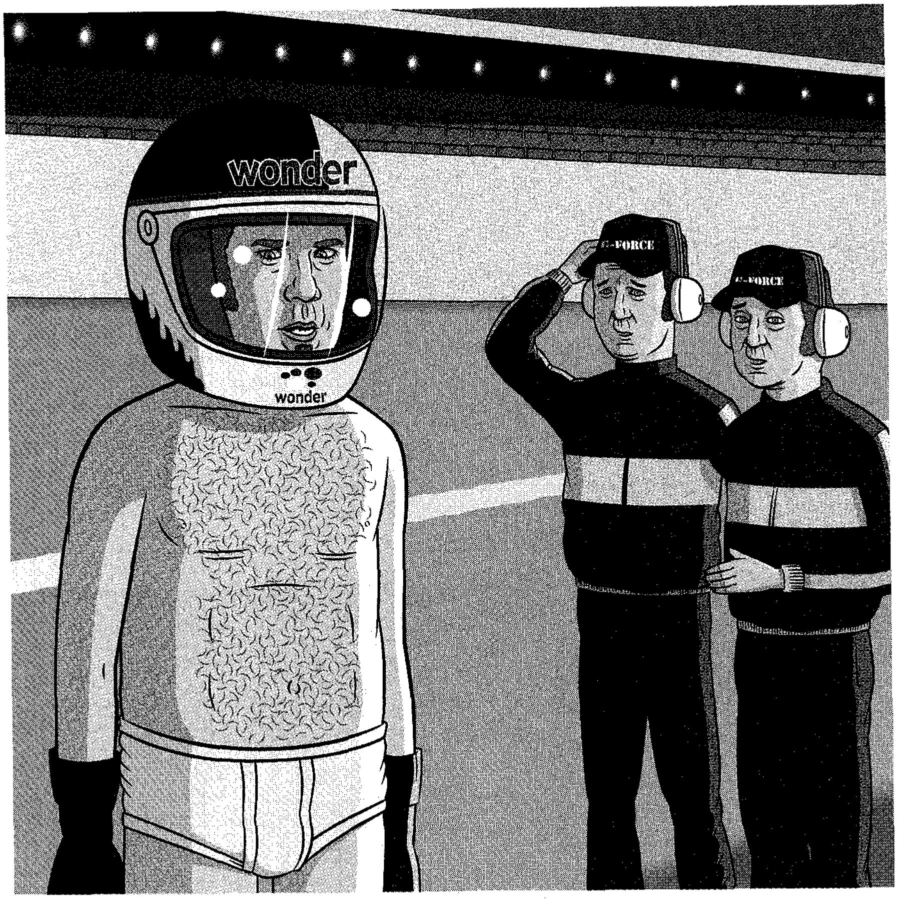
Aug. 3 at 7:30: "Les Bonnes Femmes" (1960, Claude Chabrol; in French). ◆ Aug. 3 at 9:30: "Eva" (1962, Joseph Losey). ◆ Aug. 4 at 7:30: "A Talking Picture" (2003, Manoel de Oliveira; in Portuguese, French, Italian, and Greek). ◆ Aug. 4 at 9:30: "Days of Being Wild" (1991, Wong Kar-Wai; in Cantonese). ◆ Aug. 5 at 2:45: "The General" (1927, Buster Keaton). ◆ Aug. 5 at 7: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong; in Cantonese). ◆ Aug. 6 at 2:30: "Modern Times" (1936, Charles Chaplin). ◆ Aug. 6 at 4:30: "Metropolis" (1927, Fritz Lang; silent). ◆ Aug. 6 at 7: "Open City" (1945, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ◆ Aug. 6 at 9:15: "M" (1931, Lang; in German). ◆ Aug. 7 at 9:30: "Yeelen (Brightness)" (1987, Souleyman Cissé; in Bambara). ◆ Aug. 10 at 7: "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl" (1993, Ray Müller; in English and German). ◆ The films of Elem Klimov and Larisa Shepitko. All films are in Russian. Aug. 3 at 9 and Aug. 7 at 7: "Heat" (1963, Shepitko) and "Larisa" (1980, Klimov). ◆ Aug. 4 at 7 and Aug. 6 at 5:30: "Adventures of a Dentist" (1965, Klimov). ◆ Aug. 4 at 9 and Aug. 7 at 9:15: "The Ascent" (1976, Shepitko). ◆ Aug. 6 at 7:30 and Aug. 10 at 7:30: "Come and See" (1986, Klimov). ◆ Through Aug. 17: A Warren Oates retrospective. Aug. 11 at 7 and Aug. 15 at 7: "Two-Lane Blacktop" (1971, Monte Hellman). ◆ Aug. 11 at 9:15 and Aug. 14 at 7: "Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia" (1974, Sam Peckinpah). ◆ Aug. 12 at 4:45: "The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond" (1960, Budd Boetticher). ◆ Aug. 12 at 7: "Dillinger" (1973, John Milius). ◆ Aug. 12 at 9:15: "Kid Blue" (1973, James Frawley). ◆ Aug. 13 at 5: "Chandler" (1971, Paul Magwood). ◆ In première. Aug. 11-15 at 7:30 and 9: "Hamilton" (†). ◆ "Essential Cinema." Aug. 13 at 5:30: "Reminiscences of a Trip to Lithuania" (1971-72, Jonas Mekas).



"Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby," a NASCAR comedy, opens Aug. 4.

MICHAEL WELDON

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—Through Aug. 29: The films of Sam Peckinpah. Aug. 2 at 6 and 9: "The Wild Bunch" (1969). ◆ Aug. 7 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Getaway" (1972). ◆ Aug. 8 at 6:50 and 9:30: "The Ballad of Cable Hogue" (1970). ◆ Aug. 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Junior Bonner" (1972). ◆ Aug. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Straw Dogs" (1971). ◆ Through Aug. 27: "French Leading Men." All films are in French. Aug. 3 at 6 and 9: "The Baker's Wife" (1938, Marcel Pagnol). ◆ Aug. 4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Hôtel du Nord" (1938, Marcel Carné). ◆ Aug. 5 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Grand Illusion" (1937, Jean Renoir). ◆ Aug. 6 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Boudu Saved from Drowning" (1932, Renoir). ◆ Aug. 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Les Cousins" (1959, Claude Chabrol). ◆ Aug. 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Casque d'Or" (1952, Jacques Becker). ◆ Sneak preview. Aug. 9 at 7: "Half Nelson" (2006, Ryan Fleck), followed by a Q. & A. with the producer Anna Boden and the director.

BRYANT PARK

Sixth Ave. between 40th and 42nd Sts. (212-768-4242)—Through Aug. 21: HBO Bryant Park Film Festival. Lawn opens at 5; screening begins at dusk. Aug. 7: "The Manchurian Candidate" (1968, John Frankenheimer). ◆ Aug. 14: "Charade" (1963, Stanley Donen).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—In revival. Aug. 2-3 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Fanfan la Tulipe" (1952, Christian-Jaque; in French). ◆ "Summer Swashbucklers." Aug. 4-5 at 1, 5:10, and 9:30: "Captain Blood" (1935, Michael Curtiz). ◆ Aug. 4-5 at 3:10 and 7:30: "The Scarlet Pimpernel" (1935, Harold Young). ◆ Aug. 6 at 1, 4:40, and 8:45: "The Prisoner of Zenda" (1937, John Cromwell). ◆ Aug. 6 at 3:10 and 7: "The Mark of Zorro" (1920, Fred Niblo; silent). ◆ Aug. 9 at 1:15, 5:10, and 9:05: "The Flame and the Arrow" (1950, Jacques Tourneur). ◆ Aug. 9 at 3:05 and 7: "The Crimson Pirate" (1952, Robert Siodmak). ◆ Aug. 10 at 1, 5:30, and 10: "The Man in the Iron Mask" (1939, James Whale). ◆ Aug. 10 at 3:10 and 7:40: "The Three Musketeers" (†). ◆ Aug. 11-12 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1940, Michael Powell, Ludwig Berger, and Tim Whelan). ◆ Aug. 15 at 1, 4:55, and 9:50: "Arabian Nights" (1942, John Rawlins). ◆ Aug. 15 at 2:45 and 7:40: "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" (1944, Arthur Lubin). ◆ Through Sept. 25: The films of Buster Keaton. Aug. 7 at 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, and 10:20: "The General" (1927). ◆ Aug. 7 at 3:10, 6:10, and 9:10: "Electric House" (1922), "One Week" (1920), and "High Sign" (1921). ◆ Aug. 14 at 2, 4:35, 7:15, and 9:50: "The Navigator" (1924). ◆ Aug. 14 at 3:20, 6, and 8:35: "Neighbors" (1920), "The Haunted House" (1921), and "The Frozen North" (1922).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—In revival. Aug. 8 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Wild Reeds" (1994, André Téchiné; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Aug. 4-5: "The Beales of Grey Gardens" (2006, Albert and David Maysles). ◆ The films of Akira Kurosawa. Aug. 11-13 at noon: "Drunken Angel" (1948; in Japanese).

LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS

Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280)—The films of Pedro Almodóvar. Call for show times. Aug. 11-15: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (1988; in Spanish).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Films from CalArts. Short-film programs. Aug. 3 at 8:15 and Aug. 7 at 8:15: "We Report, You Decide." ◆ Aug. 4 at 5:45 and Aug. 5 at 2: "Custody" (2005, Tariq Tapa) and short films. ◆ Aug. 4 at 8 and Aug. 11 at 8:15: "The (Post) Studio Artists." ◆ Through Aug. 17: "A View from the Vaults." Aug. 4 at 6: "The Band Wagon" (1953, Vincente Minnelli). ◆ Aug. 4 at 8:15: "My Neighbors the Yamadas" (1999, Isao Takahata; in Japanese). ◆ Aug. 5 at 2:30 and Aug. 6 at 6: "The Man Who Laughs" (1928, Paul Leni; silent). ◆ Aug. 5 at 7:30 and Aug. 11 at 8: "Pink Flamingos" (1972, John Waters). ◆ Aug. 7 at 8: "Key Largo" (1948, John Huston). ◆ Aug. 11 at 6 and Aug. 12 at 7:30: "Umberto D." (1952, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). ◆ Aug. 12 at 2:30: "A Perfect World" (1993, Clint Eastwood). ◆ Aug. 12 at 5 and Aug. 14 at 6: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ◆ Aug. 13 at 2: "Weddings and Babies" (1958, Morris Engel). ◆ Aug. 13 at 4: "Buffalo '66" (1998, Vincent Gallo). ◆ "Dada on Film." Aug. 13 at 4:30: Short silent films, including "Anemic Cinema" (1926, Marcel Duchamp).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Independence World Cinema Showcase." Aug. 4 at 7:30: "Three Times" (2005, Hou Hsiao-Hsien; in Mandarin and Taiwanese). ◆ Through Aug. 20: The films of Frank Borzage. Aug. 5 at 2: "Little Man, What Now?" (1934). ◆ Aug. 5 at 4:30: "A Farewell to Arms" (1932). ◆ Aug. 6 at 2: "Desire" (1936). ◆ Aug. 6 at 4:30: "Three Comrades" (1938). ◆ Aug. 12 at 2: "Secrets" (1933). ◆ Aug. 12 at 4:30: "Bad Girl" (1931). ◆ Aug. 13 at 2: "Disputed Passage" (1939). ◆ Aug. 13 at 4:30: "Strange Cargo" (1940). ◆ "Repertory Nights." Aug. 5-6 at 6:30: "Repulsion" (1965, Roman Polanski). ◆ Aug. 12-13 at 6:30: "The Battle of Algiers" (1965, Gillo Pontecorvo; in French, English, and Arabic).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—Selected screenings. Aug. 2-8 at 9: "Vacationland" (2006, Todd Verow). ◆ Aug. 9-15: "Satellite" (2004, Jeff Winner). ◆ Aug. 14 at 6:30: "Tromeo and Juliet" (1996, Lloyd Kaufman), presented by the director and others from the Troma team. ◆ Aug. 15 at 7: Short films by Marie Losier.

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Aug. 4-5: "Sixteen Candles" (1984, John Hughes). ◆ Aug. 11-12: "The Big Lebowski" (1998, Joel Coen).

THALIA THEATRE

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. Aug. 5-6 at 5: "The Maltese Falcon" (1941, John Huston). ◆ Aug. 5-6 at 7: "Scarface" (1932, Howard Hawks). ◆ Aug. 12-13 at 5: "The Westerner" (1940, William Wyler). ◆ Aug. 12-13 at 7: "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948, John Huston).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Play It Loud," rock documentaries. Aug. 2 at 8:30 and Aug. 3 at 6:30: "Noise" (2005, Olivier Assayas). ♦ Aug. 5 at 3 and Aug. 7 at 6:30: "Glastonbury" (2005, Julien Temple). ♦ Aug. 5 at 6 and Aug. 10 at 9: "Not a Photograph: The Mission of Burma Story" (2006, David Kleiler, Jr., and Jeff Iwanicki). ♦ Aug. 5 at 8: "Everyone Stares: The Police Inside Out" (2005, Stewart Copeland). ♦ Aug. 6 at 2: "No Direction Home" (†). ♦ Aug. 6 at 6 and Aug. 7 at 9:15: "You're Gonna Miss Me" (2006, Keven McAlester). ♦ "Independents Night." Aug. 10 at 6:30: "Manhattan, Kansas" (2006, Tara Wray). ♦ Through Aug. 24: Russian science fiction. All films are in Russian. Aug. 11 at 6 and Aug. 13 at 5, Aug. 14 at 3:30, and Aug. 15 at 1:15 and 6:15: "Zero City" (1988, Karen Shakhnazarov). The Aug. 11 and Aug. 13 screenings will be followed by a Q. & A. with the director. ♦ Aug. 11 at 8 and Aug. 13 at 7:45: "Stalker" (1979, Andrei Tarkovsky), introduced by Shakhnazarov.

READINGS AND TALKS

"AN EVENING WITH HARRY, CARRIE & GARP"
The best-selling authors J. K. Rowling, Stephen King, and John Irving read selections from their work at one of the city's most luxe venues, Radio City Music Hall. (Sixth Ave at 50th St. 212-307-7171. Aug. 1-2 at 7:30.)

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Maria Tucci and other actors offer a dramatic reading, in a translation by Ann Goldstein, of the Italian writer Alessandro Baricco's "An Iliad," a novel based on the classic epic. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. 212-360-2777. Aug. 2 at 7:30.)

"MAD. SQ. READS"
The journalist Rich Cohen offers selections from "Sweet and Low: A Family Story," his tale of how the artificial sweetener enriched, and split apart, his relatives. (Madison Square Park, Fifth Ave. at 23rd St. For more information, call 212-538-6667. Aug. 3 at 6:30.)

ROCKY SULLIVAN'S PUB
Robert Sullivan, the author of "The Meadowlands" and "Rats" and the veteran of more than two dozen coast-to-coast car trips, reads from his latest book, "Cross Country." (129 Lexington Ave., between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary. Aug. 9 at 8.)

"A FICTIONAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES"
T Cooper and Adam Mansbach, the editors of this new comic anthology (the full title includes the phrase "With Huge Chunks Missing"), join Kate Bornstein, Amy Bloom, Paul LaFarge, and other contributors. (Barnes & Noble, 4 Astor Pl. No tickets necessary. Aug. 10 at 7.)

STRAND BOOKSTORE
The veteran journalist Gay Talese reads from and discusses his memoir "A Writer's Life." (Broadway at 12th St. No tickets necessary. Aug. 14 at 7.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

HONG KONG DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL IN NEW YORK
More than a hundred teams, competing in forty-foot, two-thousand-pound boats made of teak and decorated with a dragon head at the bow, a dragon's tail at the stern, and red, green, and blue scales, take to the waters of Flushing Meadows Corona Park on Aug. 12-13, in the continuation of a tradition that dates back thousands of years. Some slightly newer activities, including performances by local rock bands and a dumpling-eating contest, round out the festivities on land. (For more information, visit www.hkdbf-ny.org.)

LIVING HISTORY DAY
A daylong Civil War encampment on Governors Island focussing on the draft riots of 1863 takes place on Aug. 12. In addition to uniformed volunteers and fife-and-drum performances, the event includes an appearance by Barnet Schecter, who will read from his book "The Devil's Own Work: The Civil War Draft Riots and the Fight to Reconstruct America." (For more information, call 212-440-2202.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
A poignant image of a distressed mother clutching her child as warplanes pass overhead in threatening formation—a lot in **Swann's** summer sale of vintage posters (Aug. 2)—is eerily of-the-moment, though it dates from the Spanish Civil War. In the auction, war and propaganda share the stage uncomfortably with images of travel and entertainment. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.) ♦ **Christie's** eases into its summer slumber with a two-day House Sale (Aug. 1-2) that includes a selection of furniture and paintings, along with a large, elaborate Victorian birdcage. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Furnishings and decorations are also on the block at **Doyle**, in one of its periodic Doyle at Home sales, to be held on Aug. 3. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

The two-day Charlie Parker Jazz Festival.

SETH

ON THE HORIZON

DANCE

IN THE SUN

Aug. 16 and Aug. 25-26

The free Lincoln Center Out of Doors series includes the Martha Graham Dance Company, the country's oldest modern-dance troupe, and Garth Fagan's Rochester-based group. (www.lincolncenter.org.)

MOVIES

PLANET HUSTON

Aug. 18-Sept. 22

The actor Walter Huston, who graced such classics as D. W. Griffith's "Abraham Lincoln," founded a dynasty. His son, John, burst onto the scene as a director with "The Maltese Falcon," and John's children Anjelica and Danny are luminaries in today's Hollywood. MOMA offers a month of the brood's achievements on both sides of the camera. (212-708-9480.)

NIGHT LIFE

BIRD SONGS

Aug. 26-27

The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival returns with performances by George Coleman, the Sonny Fortune Quartet, and Greg Osby in Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park on the first day and appearances by Ray Mantilla, Joanne Brackeen, and David Sanchez in Tompkins Square Park on the second. The legendary drummer Chico Hamilton, who is celebrating his eighty-fifth birthday in September, will play both afternoons. (www.cityparksfoundation.org.)

ART

PRIVATE EYE

Aug. 30-Sept. 16

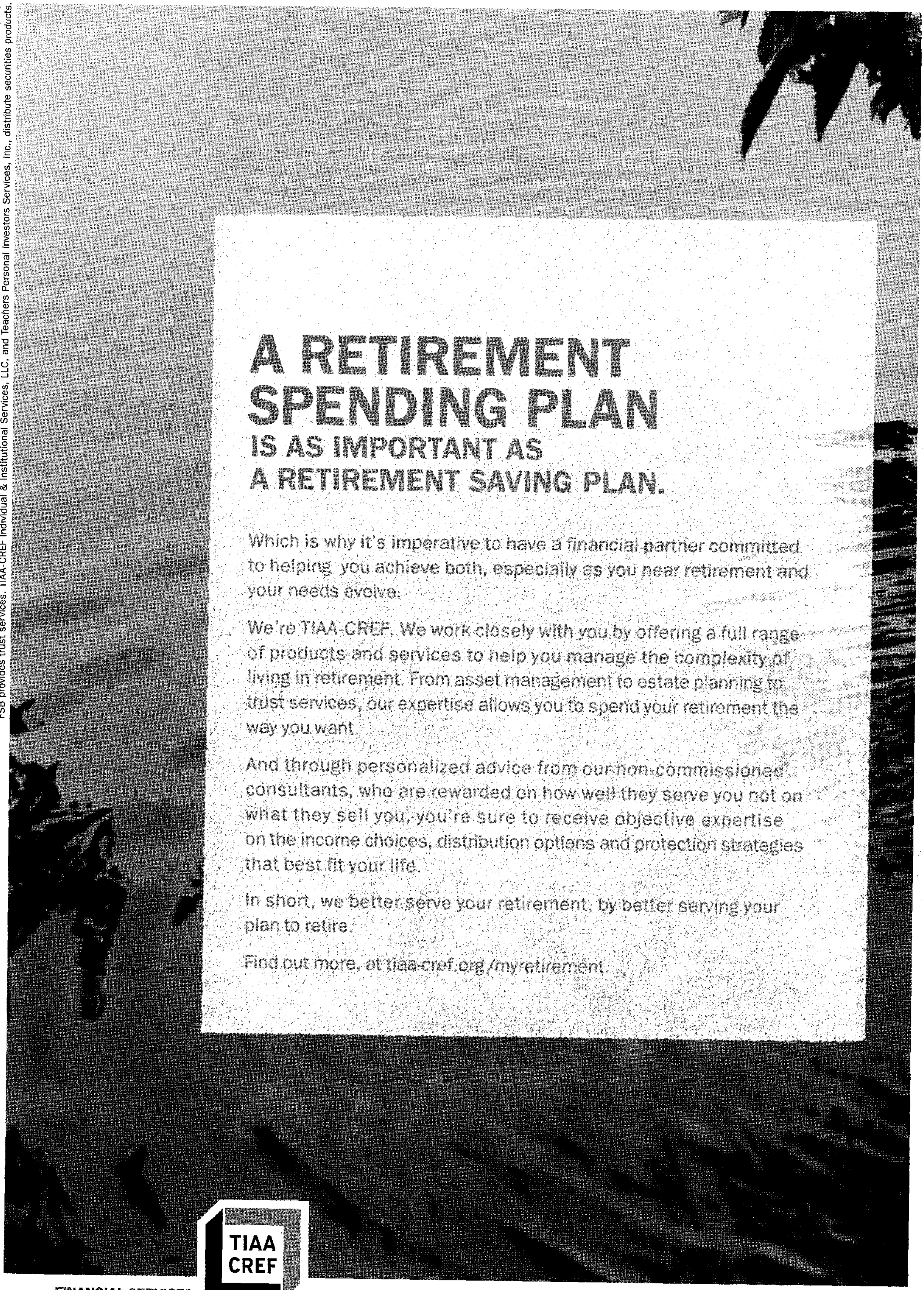
Over the course of his long and celebrated career, Richard Avedon amassed a grand collection of the work of friends and fellow-photographers ranging from Jacques-Henri Lartigue to Diane Arbus and Peter Hujar. Pace/MacGill presents a show of Avedon's personal stash. (212-759-7999.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

MEET THE NEW BOSS

Sept. 25

The Peter Gelb era at the Metropolitan Opera begins not with the traditional opening-night gala but with Anthony Minghella's production of "Madama Butterfly," with James Levine conducting and Cristina Gallardo-Domâs in the title role. (212-362-6000.)



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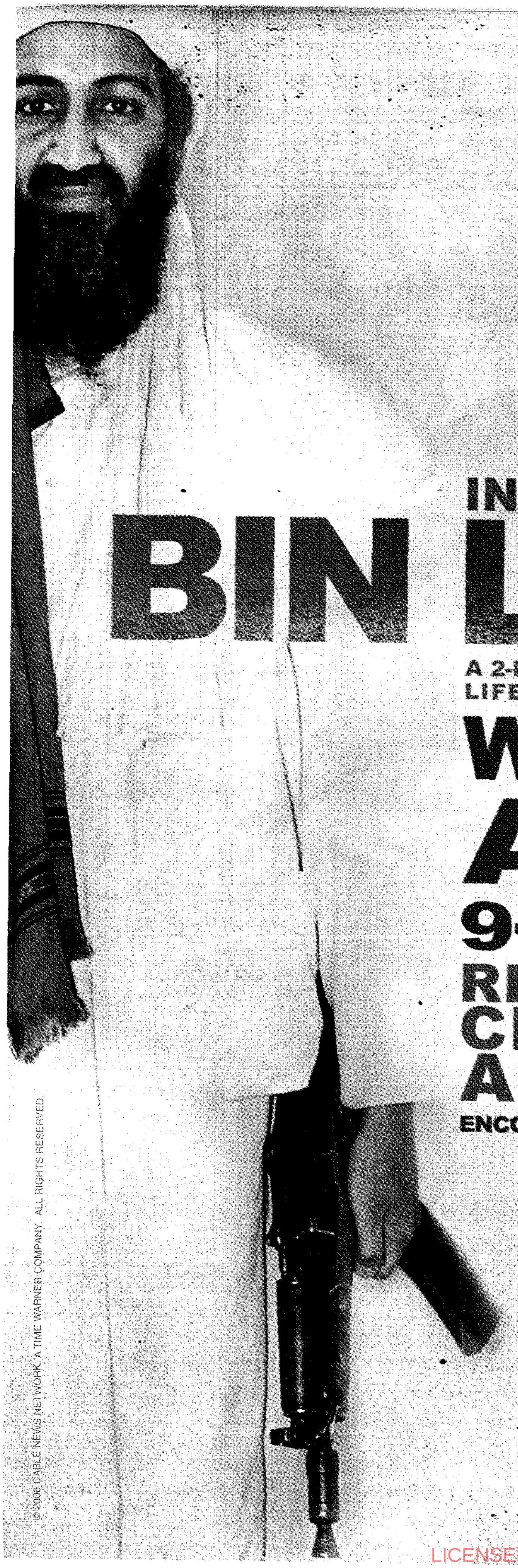

CNN PRESENTS

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF

BIN LADEN

A 2-HOUR SPECIAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE LIFE OF THE WORLD'S MOST WANTED MAN

WEDNESDAY AUG 23

9-11PM ET/PT

REPORTED BY CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR

ENCORE: SAT AUG 26 & SUN AUG 27 7PM ET/PT

CNN.com/binladen

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
THE "IC" FACTOR

What is the name of a certain political party in the United States—not the one which controls the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government but the other one, which doesn't? The question is a small one, to be sure: a minor irritation, a wee gnat compared to such red-clawed, sharp-toothed horrors as the health-care mess and the budget deficit, to say nothing of Iraq and Lebanon. But it has been around longer than any of them, and, annoyingly, it won't go away.

Last week, the gnat was buzzing at a high altitude. An e-mail from none other than "President George W. Bush," arriving last Monday morning in millions of in-boxes, hinted strongly at where the Commander-in-Chief stands on the name issue. To wit:

> The Democrat Party has a clear record when it comes to taxes.

And:

> Nothing threatens our hard-won reforms and economic prosperity more than a Democrat victory this November.

And:

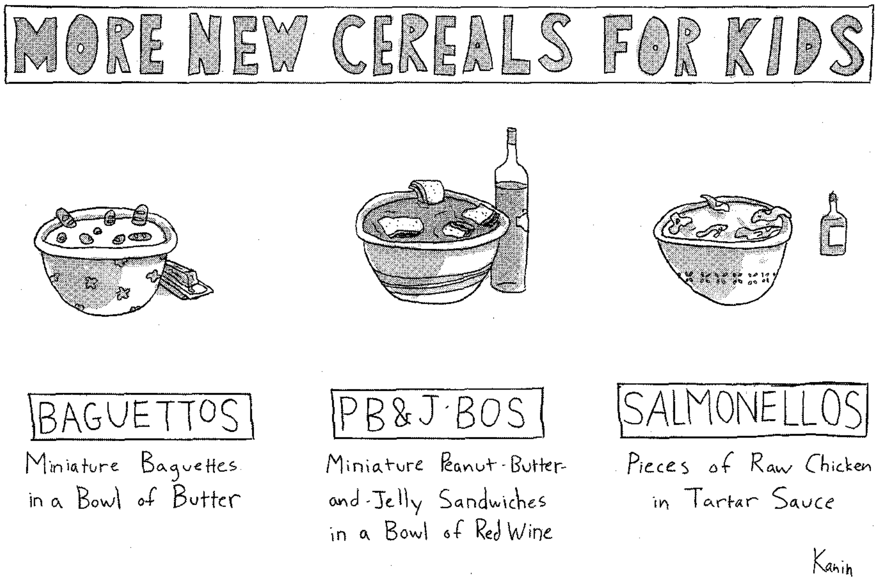
> The difference is clear: if you want the government in your pocket, vote Democrat.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

An alternative view is that it's called the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party itself takes this view, and many nonpartisan authorities agree. The American Heritage College Dictionary, for example, defines the noun "Democratic Party" as "One of the two major US political parties, owing its origin to a split in the Democratic-Republican Party under Andrew Jackson in 1828." (It defines "Democrat *n*" as "A Democratic Party member" and "Democratic *adj*" as "Of, relating to, or characteristic of the Democratic Party," but gives no definition for—indeed, makes no mention of—"Democrat Party *n*" or "Democrat *adj*".) Other dictionaries, and reference works generally, appear to be unanimous on these points. The broader literate public also comes down on the "Democratic" side, as indicated by frequency of usage. A Google search for "Democratic Party" yields around forty million hits. "Democrat Party" fetches fewer than two million.

There's no great mystery about the motives behind this deliberate misnaming. "Democrat Party" is a slur, or intended to be—a handy way to express contempt. Aesthetic judgments are subjective, of course, but "Democrat Party" is jarring verging on ugly. It fairly screams "rat." At a slightly higher level of sophistication, it's an attempt to deny the enemy the positive connotations of its chosen appellation. During the Cold War, many people bridled at obvious misnomers like "German Democratic Republic," and perhaps there are some members of the Republican Party (which, come to think of it, has been drifting toward monarchism of late) who genuinely regard the Democratic Party as undemocratic. Perhaps there are some who hope to induce it to go out of existence by refusing to call it by its name, à la terming Israel "the Zionist entity." And no doubt there are plenty of others who say "Democrat Party" just to needle the other side while signalling solidarity with their own—the partisan equivalent of flashing a gang sign.

The history of "Democrat Party" is hard to pin down with any precision, though etymologists have traced its use to as far back as the Harding Administration. According to William Safire, it got a boost in 1940 from Harold Stassen, the Republican Convention keynoter that year, who used it to signify disapproval of such less than fully democratic Democratic machine bosses as Frank Hague of Jersey City and Tom Pender-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• •

gast of Kansas City. Senator Joseph McCarthy made it a regular part of his arsenal of insults, which served to dampen its popularity for a while. There was another spike in 1976, when grumpy, growly Bob Dole denounced "Democrat wars" (those were the days!) in his Vice-Presidential debate with Walter Mondale. Growth has been steady for the last couple of decades, and today we find ourselves in a golden age of anti-"ic"-ism.

In the conservative media, the phenomenon feeds more voraciously the closer you get to the mucky, sludgy bottom. "Democrat Party" is standard jargon on right-wing talk radio and common on winger Web sites like NewsMax.com, which blue-pencils Associated Press dispatches to de-"ic" references to the Party of F.D.R. and J.F.K. (The resulting impression that "Democrat Party" is O.K. with the A.P. is as phony as a North Korean travel brochure.) The respectable conservative journals of opinion sprinkle the phrase around their Web sites but go light on it in their print editions. William F. Buckley, Jr., the Miss Manners *cum* Dr. Johnson of modern conservatism, dealt with the question in a 2000 column in *National Review*, the magazine he had founded forty-five years before. "I have an aversion to 'Democrat' as an adjective," Buckley began.

> Dear Joe McCarthy used to do that, and received a rebuke from this at-the-time 24-year-old. It has the effect of injecting politics into language, and that should be avoided. Granted there are difficulties, as when one desires to describe a "democratic" politician, and is jolted by possible ambiguity.
>
> But English does that to us all the time, and it's our job to get the correct meaning transmitted without contorting the language.

The job of politicians, however, is different, and among those of the Republican persuasion "Democrat Party" is now nearly universal. This is partly the work of Newt Gingrich, the nominal author of the notorious 1990 memo "Language: A Key Mechanism of Control," and his Contract with America pollster, Frank Luntz, the Johnny Appleseed of such linguistic innovations as "death tax" for estate tax and "personal accounts" for Social Security privatization. Luntz, who road-tested the adjectival use of "Democrat" with a focus group in 2001, has concluded that the only people who really dislike it are highly partisan adherents of the—how you say?—Democratic Party. "Those two letters actually do matter," Luntz said the other day. He added that he recently finished writing a book—it's entitled "Words That Work"—and has been diligently going through the galley proofs taking out the hundreds of "ic"s that his copy editor, one of those partisan Dems, had stuck in.

In days gone by, the anti-"ic" tic tended to be reined in at the Presidential level. Ronald Reagan never used it in polite company, and George Bush *père* was too well brought up to use the truncated version of the out party's name more than sparingly. Not so Bush *fils*—and not just in e-mails sent to the Party faithful, which he obviously never reads, let alone writes. "It's time for the leadership in the Democrat Party to start laying out ideas," he said a few weeks ago, using his own personal mouth. "The Democrat Party showed its true colors during the tax debate," he said a few months before that. "Nobody from the Democrat Party has actually stood up and called for actually getting rid of the terrorist surveillance program," he said a week before that. What he meant is anybody's guess, but his bad manners were impossible to miss. Hard as it is to believe from this distance in time, George W. Bush came to office promising to "change the tone." That he has certainly done. But, as with so much else, it hasn't worked out quite the way he promised.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

BABEL DEPT.
13D

Robert L. Chapman, Jr., the founder of Chapman Capital, a Los Angeles-based hedge fund, is no relation to the late lexicographer Robert L. Chapman, who is often credited with modernizing the venerable Roget's International Thesaurus (he edited the fourth and fifth editions). Chappy, as the latter was known, taught medieval literature at Drew University and took on the thesaurus work to help pay the bills; Chapman, Jr., who goes by Bob, suffers from no lack of cash, but he has a similarly large (he might say gargantuan) vocabulary. Bob writes letters—publicly filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission—that no recreational user of, say, the Microsoft Word thesaurus could dare parse, let alone compose. A sampling of Chapman's correspondence from the past two months reveals the following usages: "pretermit," "fustigation," "macerate," "ablated," "accretive," "remora," "phlebotomizing," "gasconade." Only occasionally does he bother to define his terms for the benefit of the less literate. (" 'Remora': any of several marine fishes of the family Echeneidae, having on the head a sucking disk with which they attach themselves to sharks; see volatility injected into other activist portfolios due to the remora's often swashbuckling behavior.") "There is a cacophony coming out of my mouth," he said, the other day, over the telephone.

Bob Chapman is what's known as a shareholder activist—a breed of corporate raider who, out of some combination of self-love and Robin Hood-ish altruism, wages public wars against the highly paid leadership of underperforming corporations. His literary genre is that of Schedule 13D, a form that investors are required to submit upon acquiring a five-per-cent ownership stake in any public company. Item No. 7 on the form calls for "material to be filed as exhibits," which some activists have interpreted as an invitation to attach a free-form personal essay. Chapman sent his first 13D zinger in 1997 but returned to the activist scene only recently, after taking a self-styled "sabbatical" to travel the world in the wake of a surfing accident. (Like any showboat, Chapman has his detractors; some hedge-fund types snicker that the mishap occurred while he was *body* surfing.)

As with all genres, the 13D attack letter has its tropes: macho swagger about work ethic, war metaphors, regional stereotyping. Chapman's contributions stand out, however, with a baroque style that is reminiscent of David Foster Wallace: heavy on footnotes (there are fourteen in one paragraph of a recent filing) and on wordplay (no alliteration is too much: "expeditious exercise," "tutelary tactics," "insidious ink"). In early June, Chapman fired off a letter ("Dear Denny") to the C.E.O. of the Dallas-based software company Carreker, whom he called "Long Winder of the Year." "I have nightmares involving my choking down gourmet tuna sandwiches and uninformed, 'long-term' business judgments, both being served in abundant quantity by you and your Texas 'pardners,' " he wrote. (At one point, he referred to the C.E.O.'s brother "Jimbo," whose "bloodline," in a recent press release, had evidently "pressed the surface like a varicose vein.")

A few weeks later, Chapman addressed the board of Sunterra, an international resort company whose European division he described as "a malignant cancer ulcerating" the healthier North American branch. And this past month he tore into Mr. John C. Lewis, of Vitesse Semiconductor Corporation, writing, "One wonders . . . how you possibly can be trusted to wean Vitesse executives away from sucking on [the company's] own stock options areola."

"It literally is a thankless job," Chapman said, of his literary efforts on behalf of shareholders. He yearns, as he has written more than once, for "the ephemerally salubrious separation of management from ownership." In the case of Carreker and Sunterra, he may be getting his wish; both companies have announced that they are looking into selling.

Chappy, the thesaurus editor, in a preface to the 1986 New Dictionary of American Slang, wrote about the "special languages of subcultures," which have historically been responsible for giving us lively if "unrespectable" new terminology. He mentioned "hoboes," "gypsies," and "cowboys." "We must note that some of these traditional spawning grounds for slang have lost their productivity," he said. If only he'd lived to hang around with some hedge-fund managers.

—*Ben McGrath*

COLD CASE
HIT AND RUN

For almost five years, drivers emerging from the Lincoln Tunnel on the Manhattan side have passed a sign that may have prompted them to wonder about the grinding wheels of justice, if not fate. The sign, three feet by six feet and permanent-seeming, is affixed to a chain-link fence at the northeast corner of Fortieth Street and Dyer Avenue. "Your help is needed," it reads. "The Port Authority Police are looking for any information about a hit and run accident in which a pedestrian was killed by a vehicle at 40th Street and Dyer Ave. on Friday 11/30/01 at 7:40 p.m."

As the date has receded, this plea has started to seem sadly stale, another instance, possibly, of city signage that has lingered too long. Now and then, you see billboards and bus advertisements for musicals that have closed or television shows that aired months ago. In the subway stations, a year-old and hastily Magic Markered announcement—"Passengers are advised that beginning 7/22/05 all backpacks and large containers are subject to random search"—still monopolizes token-booth whiteboards. Faded advertisements painted on brick building façades, grocery bags that feature the Twin Towers, coffee-shop head shots of Ernest Borgnine and Bill Beutel: sure, this town is full of ghosts. But it's strange when one of the first things you see, arriving in New York from New Jersey, is this remnant of thwarted inquiry. If every cold case warranted a sign, the city would be a grim thicket.

Death by hit and run is pretty common, unfortunately; there have been two incidents in the past two weeks. The victim of the 2001 hit and run was Douglas Dibble, a thirty-four-year-old adjunct professor of art at Hunter College. He had left work, on West Forty-first Street, and was walking east across Dyer, on his way home to Queens, when he was struck by the driver's-side mirror of a bus. The impact jerked him out of his shoes and lopped off the top of his head. Then the bus ran him over. The bus did not stop.

This account comes from Warren Davis, one of two Port Authority detectives whose name and number are at the bottom of the sign. (The other has since retired.) Davis arrived on the scene that evening. Two women who had seen the accident and alerted a traffic cop were gone. So was an old man who had been the first to pull up in front of the body. No one had interviewed them. That night, Davis went to the bus terminal to investigate but found nothing. Two months later, he and the Port Authority put up the sign, and friends posted flyers with a photograph of Dibble and his two-year-old daughter, as an extra prod to memory or conscience.

In July, 2003, Davis finally got a call. A woman left a message on his answering machine but neglected to leave a number. "So we had our phones dumped," he explained the other day. That is, the police got a subpoena and checked their own phone records. Eventually, they found the woman—the one, in fact, who, with her mother, had originally summoned the traffic cop. The information the women gave Davis squared with some of what he'd learned in the interim: that the bus had probably been a Greyhound, the only one of four to have left the terminal by the time he got there, on the night of the accident. The Port Authority impounded the bus. It had been cleaned, but its side mirror was dented and chipped.

The driver of this bus was a man named Jackie Jennings. He had been in three accidents in a month, at a previous employer, Academy Bus Tours. Jennings wouldn't talk to Davis, and the district attorney's office concluded that there wasn't enough evidence to prosecute him; it can be hard to prove that a driver, especially of a vehicle as large and unwieldy as a Greyhound bus, knew that he hit before he ran. Jennings, at any rate, didn't reply to a lawsuit (against both Jennings and Greyhound) that Dibble's widow filed in 2003. Greyhound took over for him. Last year, a state court granted a summary judgment—a finding, essentially, of his and Greyhound's negligence in the accident—which Greyhound is appealing.

So the sign worked, and it didn't. Either way, its usefulness seems to have run its course. Davis said last week that he left it up, even after finding the two witnesses, in the hope that the "older gentleman" might surface as well. That hope has faded. "We'll probably take the sign down in the next six months or a year," he said. No hurry.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

CAT'S AWAY DEPT.
HOME ALONE AT MOMA

Museums after hours are as strangely enticing as they are forsaken, giving rise to fantasies of stowing away in a sarcophagus, as in "From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler," and wandering at midnight through deserted labyrinths of bas-reliefs and medieval weaponry. On the sort of summer Saturday night when everyone over twenty-five decamps to the so-called "country," a group of assistants at the Museum of Modern Art scored a rare opportunity to linger after closing time. After their bosses had gone home, they set up five open bars, persuaded the band Chicks on Speed to play in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, and invited eight hundred of their friends over for a monumental house party.

"I said, 'What do you want to do? Go to it. We'll get out of your way,'" Glenn Lowry, MOMA's director, recalled. His gesture came as part of an initiative called PopRally, which arose when Lowry convened some of his youngest employees and asked what they'd do if he handed over the keys to the building. "If I and the Events Committee were organizing it," he said, "we'd send out formal invitations on museum stationery, and it would probably end up looking like any other event that we do." He had a point. The catering for one recent PopRally function had consisted entirely of candy, and the invitation for this event, which included a private viewing of the new Douglas Gordon video installation, had been circulated via e-mail. Scattered around on tables were purple sign-up cards, asking partygoers to submit their cell-phone numbers, "for text-messaging purposes."

"We're trying to reach the post-college, prenatal crowd," Eliza Ryan (Georgetown, Art History, '04), a PopRally committee member, said. And so the galleries were packed with fledgling New Yorkers who had been intrigued enough to allow their normally keen socio-geographic compasses ("I definitely don't usually go out in midtown," "I stay between Canal and Twenty-seventh Street") to stray north for a few hours. "It's really reminiscent of what used to go down in the eighties, mixing music with contemporary art," Kenny Latham said. He had on bright-orange Vans and a matching porkpie hat and had come with his boyfriend, Keith Boadwee, to see the Chicks. "We're rock-and-roll fags," he said. Another couple—Tim, a gold lamé hobo bag slung over his shoulder, and Eli, an artist (of some renown) who works under the name Assume Vivid Astro Focus—spoke of their excitement at having dodged MOMA's twenty-dollar admission fee (the cover charge for the party was ten bucks a head), while a philosopher named Ian compared the scene to a "hipster mating ceremony." Guests milled around, holding bottles of Brahma or cans of Sparks, an energy concoction of alcohol, caffeine, and taurine hybrid. Later, one partygoer said, "This is what Republicans think goes on at museums."

After a couple of hours of artsy banter ("Is this band really conceptual, or are they just not on yet?"), Douglas Gordon took the stage in the Agnes Gund Garden Lobby, where the performance had been moved, owing to a thunderstorm. "The whole fucking thing is, we're all Chicks on Speed!" he roared into the mike, before turning it over to the band. Four severe women, faces war painted and bodies bandoliered in striped fabrics—they looked like nautical majorettes—began high-stepping in place and screeching in the upper octaves. Their act, which involved hammily pretending to play various objects in time with a piped-in soundtrack—lip-synching with instruments, basically—included a ditty called "MySpace" and a video of the band members, naked, banging drums on some or another industrial rooftop. Toward the end of the set, one of the Chicks ran into the wings. She reëmerged, stripped to the waist, save for duct-tape pasties, and began power-stitching away on a sewing machine, in the shadow of a vast Miró.

Watching all of this from the second-floor bookstore, the overhang of which had been transformed into a sort of disco balcony, was a white-haired gentleman, dressed in neat jeans and a pressed shirt. A crasher! His name was Peter Reed, and he is a curator at the museum. He said that his weekend plans had changed at the last minute, and that he'd snuck in the back door.

—*Lauren Collins*

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
UNSAFE AT ANY PRICE

A couple of weeks ago, the Senate Appropriations Committee did something unusual: it actually said no to the Defense Department, trimming next year's requested defense budget by a small amount. In practice, the cuts will likely be quashed by Congress; as Representative Christopher Shays said, nearly a year into the war on terror, "We're at war, and I'm saying I'm not going to look military personnel in the eye and say I voted against their budget." That's understandable, but it helps explain why we have a defense budget that is over half a trillion dollars, forty per cent higher than it was in 2001. More than half the federal government's discretionary spending goes to the military, and, while a sizable chunk goes toward the fight against terrorism and the Iraq war, too much has nothing to do with the demands of a post-9/11 world.

Over the past five years, we've heard a lot about the rise of what Donald Rumsfeld likes to call "asymmetric warfare," and about the need to equip our military to fight "nontraditional" enemies. But a look at the defense budget shows that we're building a new military while still paying for the old one. Money is going into Special Operations and intelligence, but far more is being spent on high-tech weapons systems designed to fight enemies (like the Soviet Union) that no longer exist—eighty billion dollars on attack submarines, three billion apiece on new destroyers, and hundreds of billions on two different new models of jet fighter. Advocates insist that we need to be able to contest any "near peer" rival. But the U.S. has no near-peers—or, indeed, any distant peers, as we now spend more on defense than the rest of the world put together.

Not only are we buying stuff we don't need; we're buying it badly. Astonishing budget overruns are routine. The Future Combat System, for instance—designed to remake the battlefield with robot vehicles and networked communications systems—began as a ninety-billion-dollar project, then became a hundred-and-sixty-billion-dollar project, and, a recent Pentagon estimate suggests, will eventually cost three hundred billion dollars. Such inefficiency is seldom punished—the Pentagon often hands out bonuses even when companies fail to meet their targets—and is tolerated by regulators. Although government agencies have been required to produce an annual audit of their operations since the late nineties, the Defense Department's operations are so confused that it has never been able to produce a successful audit. A few years ago, the Pentagon's own Inspector General found that more than a trillion dollars in spending simply couldn't be explained.

Of course, people have been decrying Pentagon waste and inefficiency for decades. But things have got significantly worse over the past five years, because Congress and the Bush Administration have thrown so much money at the Defense Department so fast. Studies of corporate behavior show that when companies are flush with cash they are more likely to make acquisitions that reduce their over-all value. The defense industry today, in fact, is much like Silicon Valley in the late nineties—when you give lots of money to an industry with no audits and no supervision, people lose discipline. They spend on bad ideas, gild every surface, and cheat. Is it really a surprise that billions of dollars meant for private contractors in Iraq seems to have been stolen?

The Defense Department is only asking for what it thinks it needs. But what it thinks it needs is determined in part by what it thinks it can get. A useful, if homely, analogy might be found in an experiment a group of social scientists did in an apartment building. One day, they left out a bowl of M&M's for people to take, with a small scoop beside it. When, the next day, they left a much larger scoop, people took two-thirds more M&M's. People could have taken just as many M&M's on the first day; they just would have had to take more scoops. They took more the second day because the larger scoop sent a message that that was what they were supposed to do. Congress and the President have, in effect, handed the Pentagon the mother of all scoops.

The fiscal consequences of this are obviously dismal, but, even worse, there's a strong possibility that giving the military a blank check is actually making us less safe. To begin with, although the defense budget is immense, it's not infinite. And often in recent times expensive weapons projects have been given priority over mundane improvements that would help the military here and now. Earlier this year, for instance, the Senate cut funding for night-vision goggles for soldiers, while adding money to buy three new V-22 Ospreys, a plane that Dick Cheney himself tried to get rid of when he was Secretary of Defense. Similarly, we might have been able to afford appropriate body armor for the troops, and plates for the Hummers in Baghdad, if we were building only one new model of multi-billion-dollar jet fighter, instead of two.

Even more strikingly, while we pour money into all these new projects we're underfunding crucial homeland-security programs. In the past few months, Congress has eliminated six hundred and fifty million dollars for port security. Funding for New York City's security projects was cut forty per cent. And we cut nearly a hundred million from the requested budget for preventing the use of nuclear weapons in the U.S. Those cuts were considered necessary for budgetary reasons, yet the price of all of them together was less than a third of what it will cost to build a single destroyer. That ship will offer us not a whit of protection in the war on terror. But we can be sure it will keep the seas safe from the Soviet Navy.

—*James Surowiecki*

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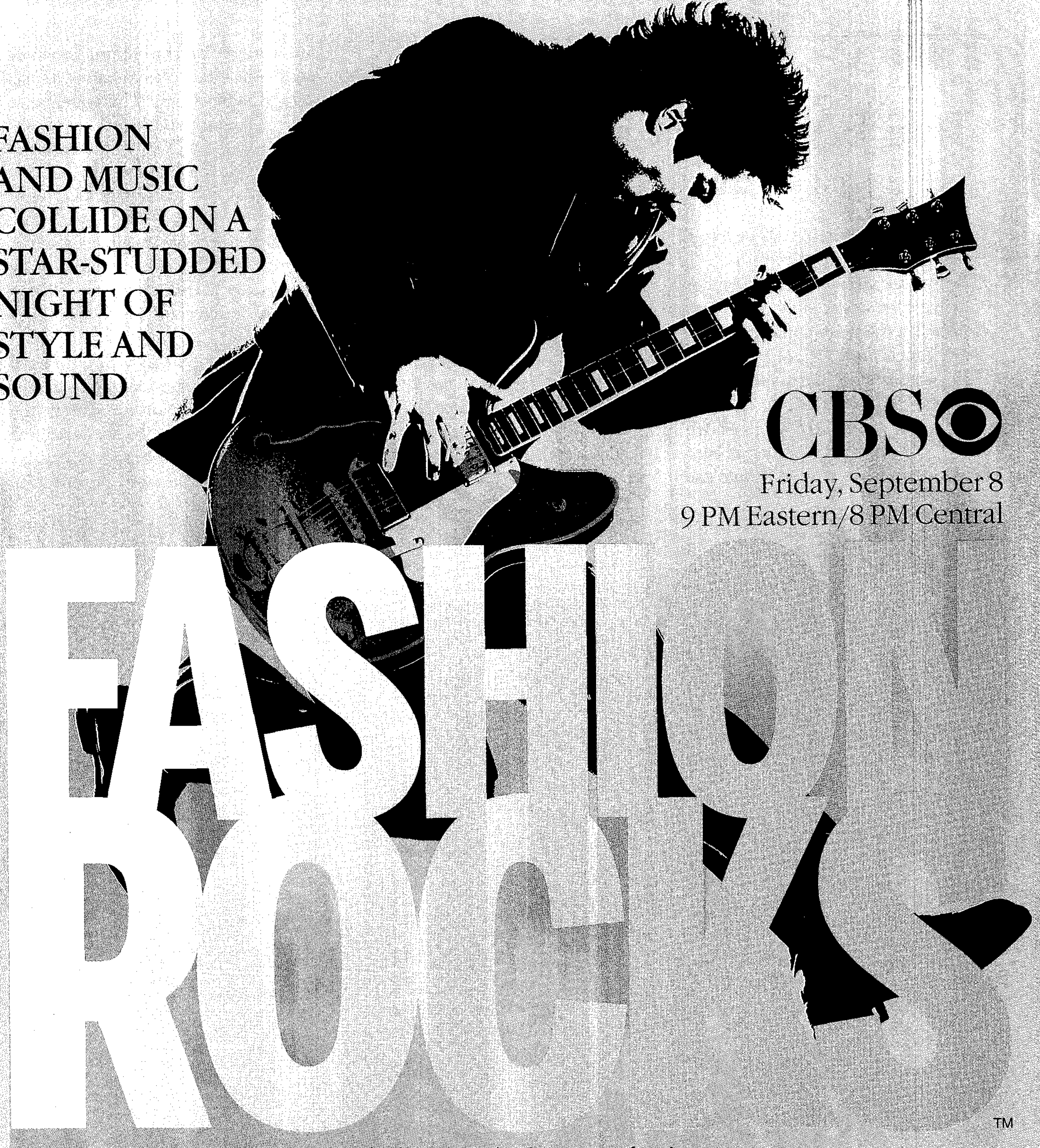

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LETTER FROM BEIRUT

THE BATTLE FOR LEBANON

Has Israel's assault weakened Hezbollah—or made it stronger?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

On a deceptively peaceful afternoon in the last week of July, Ali Fayyad, a Hezbollah strategist, puffed on a cigar and spooned up a dish of ice cream. Three scoops: chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry. We were sitting in Lina's Café, on Rue Hamra, in downtown Beirut. For eleven days, the city had been shuttered, nearly empty of people and traffic, as the Israeli military pounded Beirut's southern suburbs and the south of the country, where Hezbollah, the "Party of God," had dug its tunnels and bunkers and stored thousands of Iranian-built missiles. Bridges, tunnels, roads, and apartment buildings lay in ruins, and almost three-quarters of a million Lebanese had fled their homes in fear. But for the moment, at least, Ali Fayyad ate his ice cream in peace. Some of the shops were open, and more people were out on the street, because Condoleezza Rice was in town to meet with the Lebanese leadership and everyone figured—rightly—that the Israelis would hold fire over downtown Beirut until she left.

A man carries a poster of Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, after an Israeli air attack on a Hezbollah stronghold in southern Beirut.

ALFRED / SIPA

Fayyad is a burly man in his forties. As a member of the Hezbollah politburo, he is close to the group's supreme leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, and everything he told me at Lina's, about the cross-border abduction of two Israeli soldiers and the killing of eight others on July 12th, and the all-out armed conflict that followed, was an authorized version. "Our aim is to get Israel to return Lebanese lands"—he meant Shebaa Farms, a small strip of land occupied by Israel since 1967—"and to release three of our prisoners," Fayyad said. "One of the prisoners has been held for almost thirty years." He was referring to Samir Kuntar, a Lebanese man who, in 1979, killed an Israeli man and his four-year-old daughter. (Another daughter, who was two, was accidentally smothered when her mother tried to keep her quiet in the crawl space where they were hiding.)

"We've made many efforts to have them returned, and have tried everything, including diplomacy, with no results," Fayyad said. "So we were left with no other choice but to kidnap Israeli soldiers. The idea was 'prisoners for prisoners.' And we have exchanged prisoners with Israel in the past."

If that really was Hezbollah's plan, it went wrong from the beginning. Tensions were already high, because of the Hamas kidnapping of an Israeli soldier in Gaza, two weeks earlier, and Israel responded with bombing raids, including one, the next day, on Beirut's airport. That night, a rocket fired from Hezbollah territory hit Haifa, and more missiles, in both directions, soon followed, resulting in casualties and the threat of regional war.

Fayyad seemed both surprised and offended by the scale of the Israeli attack, which he said Hezbollah never expected. Although Hezbollah's rockets were landing in Haifa, Nahariya, Safed, and Nazareth, he also claimed that it had been reluctant to target civilians. "First, for humanitarian and moral reasons, and, second, because when civilians are killed we come out as the losers," he said. "Far more of our people get killed than Israel's." Still, for Fayyad, the events had the logic of reprisal: Israel had hit "civilian infrastructure," and so Hezbollah fired rockets into "occupied Palestine," by which he meant all of Israel.

The past two weeks have represented a return to first principles for Hezbollah, which was founded in the early eighties, after Israel invaded Lebanon. The group became known internationally when it was accused of bombing the United States Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, killing two hundred and forty-one American servicemen; that was followed by attacks on Israeli targets around the world. In Lebanon, Hezbollah draws support, in the Shiite community and beyond, for its role in driving the Israeli occupation forces out of the country in 2000. Since then, Hezbollah has presented itself as a political party, gaining two posts in the Lebanese cabinet and fourteen seats in the parliament. But, rather than disarming, it bolstered its military capacity, with Iranian and Syrian help. Now that it is under siege, the contradictions of its position—as part of the Lebanese state, but also as a clandestine body that subverts it—are plainer than ever. On July 14th, Nasrallah went on television and addressed Israel directly: "You wanted an open war. We are heading toward an open war, and we are ready for it."

The Israelis, led by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his novice Defense Minister, Amir Peretz, quickly shifted their aims from retrieving the soldiers to destroying, or at least crippling, Hezbollah. Hundreds of Lebanese had already been killed, most of them civilians; dozens of Israelis had been killed, about half of them civilians. As Fayyad considered these numbers, he puffed on his cigar and said that Israel, and not Hezbollah, had made the greater strategic miscalculation.

"The real battle started four days ago, when the Israelis moved their troops into Lebanon, and it became a ground war," he said. "That is the preferred situation for Hezbollah. They fought four days to take Maroun al-Ras, just one mile from the border, on very open ground, with tanks—four days." A few days after our conversation, control of Maroun al-Ras was still in dispute, and Israel was facing more resistance than expected in the village of Bint Jbail.

But Hezbollah's interests are not reducible to the conventional terms of a casualty balance sheet. Hezbollah has embedded itself deep within Lebanese society, in effect creating a state within a state, with an extensive social-service network. Even if Israel manages to dislodge Hezbollah's fighters, Nasrallah will likely remain the most powerful politician in the country, in part because the chaos of the last weeks has exposed the weakness of the government. Most of the Lebanese analysts I spoke with said they believed that Hezbollah had, on its own terms, been significantly strengthened by the conflict.

The damage to Lebanon, meanwhile, has been catastrophic. Fayyad said that he had arranged to evacuate his father from the family home in a village near the Israeli border, but he emphasized that Hezbollah's forces would not leave south Lebanon without a fight. "You must remember that the point of resistance is not to hold ground and face off in front of another position," Fayyad said. "That is classical warfare, but we are guerrillas. If the Israelis want to take the territory all the way up to the Litani River, do you think they can do it without heavy casualties?"

Fayyad finished his ice cream and stubbed out his cigar. Before we left Lina's, he said, "This doesn't mean that the battle isn't difficult for us. It is. It's painful, too. But the longer it goes on the harder it will be for them."

Across town, the talks between Condoleezza Rice and the Lebanese faltered the moment she announced that the Bush Administration would not yet press Israel for a ceasefire. "It doesn't do any good to raise false hopes," she said after a meeting with Lebanese, European, and U.N. officials in Rome two days later.

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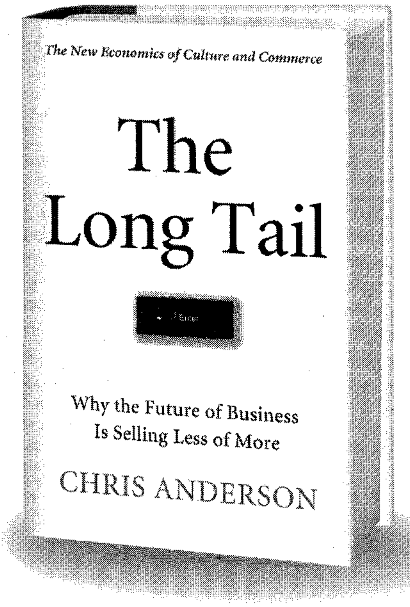
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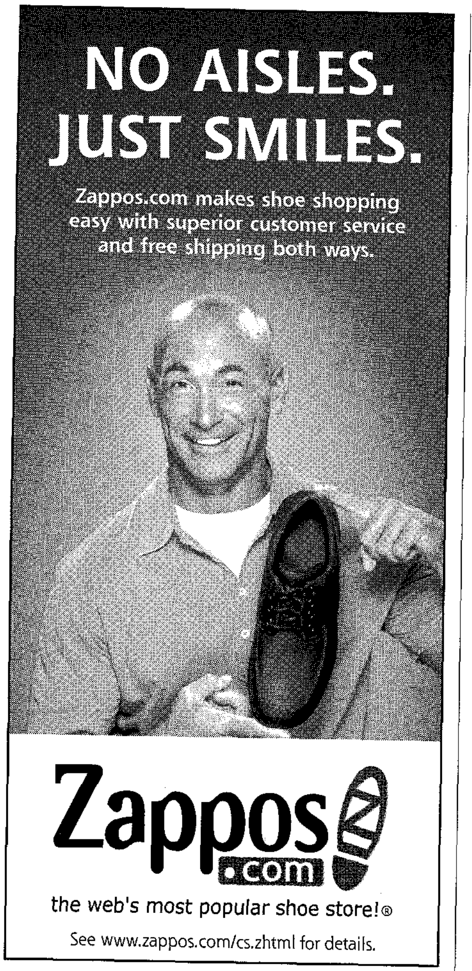
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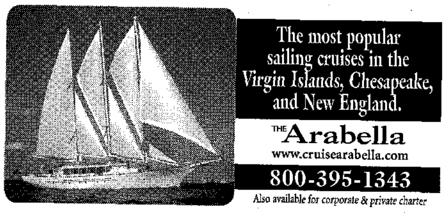
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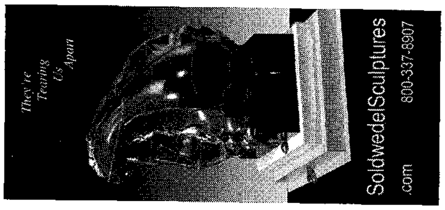
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"It's not going to happen. . . . I did say to the group, 'When will we learn?' The fields of the Middle East are littered with broken ceasefires."

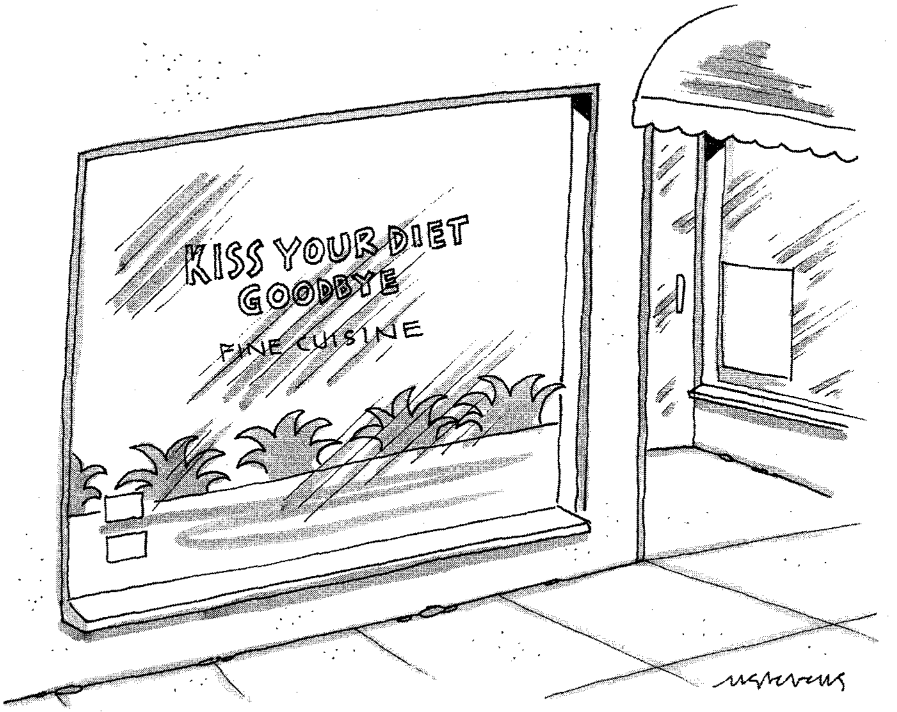
On July 23rd, the day before Rice's visit, I'd made my way toward the cities and towns of the Shia south—Hezbollistan, as some call it. I drove from Beirut with a few photographers, taking back roads to bypass the mangled highway interchanges and bridges. The only cars we saw were racing in the opposite direction, to the relative safety of the north, usually in caravans of seven or eight. Most were packed with families, who had attached makeshift white flags to the sideview mirrors. The previous week, an Israeli missile had hit a van full of refugees, killing sixteen of them. Some drivers flashed their lights, warning us not to proceed; most passed by at high speed, the expressions on their faces grim, intent, and scared.

Approaching Tyre, we saw that a bomb had gouged out a crater, twenty feet across and twenty feet deep, in the middle of the road. Nearby, a black S.U.V. sat accordioned and empty; it had crashed into a telephone pole. From the sky came the whoosh of a fighter jet and, much closer, the whine of a drone.

We pulled over to make way for a convoy of refugees. One driver, a man wearing a white T-shirt and steering a large black Mercedes-Benz, had several frightened-looking women and children in the back seat. As he slowed down to edge past the crater, he yelled out to us, in English, "We will never go back! We must leave this country." In another car, a woman pointed to a child and said, frantically, "Down syndrome." A teen-ager poked his head out of yet another car and exclaimed wildly, "U.S. Embassy!" A muffled explosion sounded, coming from beyond the city.

Over the next half hour, several more groups of cars made the run. One had its roof caved in and one of its sides smashed; it seemed impossible that anyone could drive it, but, as it came nearer, I saw an older man behind the wheel, his body bent and his head low to one side. As he passed, he called out that he had been with a woman—"a journalist like you"—and added, "She's dead." Later that day, news reports confirmed that a twenty-three-year-old Lebanese photographer, Layal Nejib, had been killed when an Israeli missile struck near her car on the road south of Tyre.

We turned north, to a hospital in Sidon. A large group of people—men, women wearing chadors, and children—were talking and crying at once. I recognized the man in the white T-shirt who had passed us by the crater. He appeared to be in shock, walking back and forth, trembling and shouting; several men were



trying to calm him down. He was soaked with sweat. Three members of his family had been wounded. I walked up to the man and said that I had seen him less than an hour before. He turned and shouted, accusingly, "You were there and I talked to you—and then they hit us!"

Near the hospital, a mosque lay in ruins. Next door was a technical college and school run by the Hariri Foundation, which was established by the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, who was assassinated in a car bombing in February, 2005. (A preliminary U.N. report implicated Syrian intelligence; the investigation is incomplete.) One of the mosque's white domes, still intact, was propped up, bizarrely, on top of the debris. Strips of the mosque's red carpet, shredded by the explosion, hung from the branches of nearby trees.

A man approached and told me that he was a teacher at the Hariri school. I asked him why he thought the Israelis had hit a mosque, and he said, simply, "It was a Hezbollah mosque." As he led me onto the grounds, a caretaker began yelling in Arabic about "Israel" and "America," but the teacher shooed him away. I found a leaflet that had been dropped by the Israelis. It showed caricatures of Syria's President, Bashar al-Assad; Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; and Khaled Mashal, a Hamas leader based in Damascus, playing flutes around an urn; from it emerged the bearded face of Nasrallah. "At your service," the caption read.

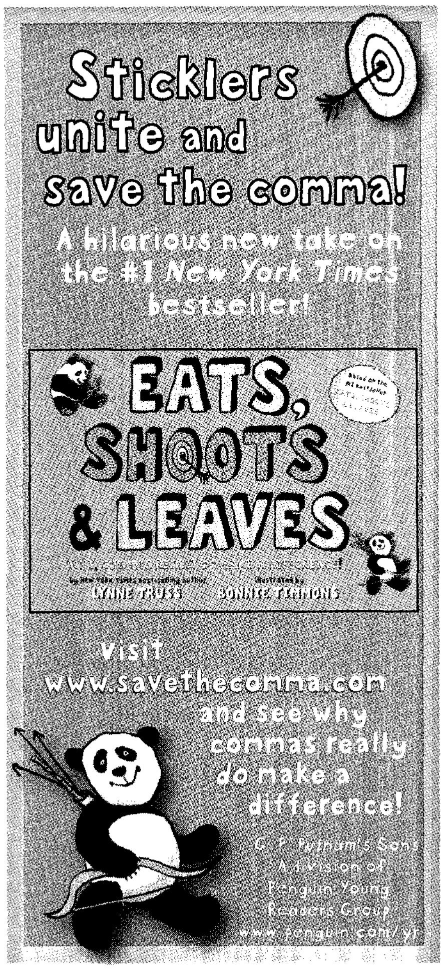
A younger man came up to me and, when we were out of earshot of others, said that Hezbollah had kept bombs in the basement of the mosque, but that two days earlier a truck had taken the cache away. It was common knowledge in Sidon, he said, and everyone was expecting the mosque to be hit. When, the previous evening, displaced people from the south had gathered on the grounds, they had been warned away.

"Everybody wants to end this Hezbollah regime, but nobody can say anything," the young man said. He told me that he had been to the United States. "I know how the people are there, what they eat and how they live and think, and we don't have anything like that here. We would like to live like that, without all this"—he waved toward the ruined mosque—"normally, the way you do." He hoped that the Israelis would be successful. When another Lebanese man came up and joined us, he stopped talking. Before we parted, I asked him if he was a Christian. He looked surprised. "No," he said. "I am Muslim. Sunni."

Sunni and Christian politicians often publicly declare their solidarity with the Shiite Hezbollah, which routinely refers to itself as a Lebanese national "resistance movement." But the sectarian fault lines have been affected by the current crisis. The population is estimated to be thirty-five per cent Christian, thirty-five per cent Shiite, twenty-five per cent Sunni, and five per cent Druze, and government posts are allocated to specific groups—the Prime Minister must be Sunni, for example. "Civil war is on everyone's mind, but it's the one thing nobody wants to talk about," an affluent Maronite Christian businessman told me over dinner at a restaurant in a Maronite enclave in the hills above Beirut. I was there with two couples—the other man, also a Christian, was a well-known former government minister—on the restaurant's terrace. Like many people with money, they had moved their families to the hills. The restaurant's sound system was playing a song by Fairouz, Lebanon's most famous singer and a national idol, whose beautiful laments evoke emotions in the Lebanese the same way that Edith Piaf once did for the French in wartime.

My hosts had been telling me, with a certain pride, how the monasteries and schools in the area had taken in thousands of Shiite refugees from the south. "This kind of thing has never happened before," the former minister said. "Most of the people from these two communities have never had this sort of contact with each other. But they have been taken in, and they are getting along." He saw it as a promising sign of "intercommunal solidarity." After all, he said, the attacks had been directed not only against the Shiites but against Lebanon's infrastructure.

Down the table, the businessman said that he wondered why, with all the resources Hezbollah had at its disposal—it receives an estimated hundred million dollars a year from Iran—it hadn't done more to protect its civilian population. "Why didn't Hezbollah prepare for this?" he said. "Where is the food, the medi-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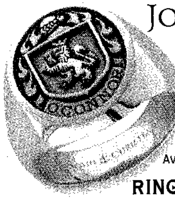
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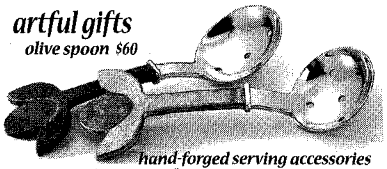

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cine? Where are the shelters for the people? Maybe, out of this, people will begin to question why they had to suffer because of the will of one man." He meant Nasrallah.

Speaking about the Shiite refugees, who were now dependent on aid handouts, his wife asked, "What will happen when October comes and winter begins? Will they stay? Will they have homes to return to? All through the civil war, I stayed in Lebanon—I never wanted to leave—but in just two weeks they have destroyed everything we have built in the fifteen years since the war ended, and now I don't want to stay anymore. This time, I want to leave."

A moment later, a distant rumble could be heard. "Are those bombs?" she said. "Is *that* what I am hearing? Here?" Neither her husband nor the ex-minister acknowledged her. But then there was another, louder explosion, and she asked again.

"We are hearing Fairouz," the ex-minister said sternly, cocking a thumb toward the sound system. He said this as if to tell her, "Don't spoil the evening," but afterward he brooded, and everyone at the table sat silently, listening to the music and, unavoidably, to the explosions in the distance.

When I arrived at the Hezbollah stronghold of Haret Hreik, in Beirut's predominantly Shiite southern suburbs, it had just been pummelled, as it had every day since the bombing began. Most of the residents, who lived in concrete apartment blocks, had left. It had been risky for reporters to go to the neighborhood, both because of the Israeli bombardment and because of the remaining Hezbollah sentinels, who were tense and suspicious. But now Hezbollah was conducting a press tour of its ruins.

I found my way to the rendezvous point, at a bombed-out highway interchange, where fifty or sixty journalists had gathered—reporters, photographers, and television cameramen. An energetic young man named Hussein Naboulsi, who runs Hezbollah's press office, announced that the tour would be fast, and that no one should stray from the group. He then headed off so quickly that people had to sprint to keep up. Hezbollah men kept an eye on the sky, and on us.

We walked past entire apartment blocks that had been flattened. The streets were littered with chunks of concrete, insulation material, twisted aluminum shutters, broken glass, and dangling electrical wires, and it became difficult to walk. Naboulsi paused and waved his arms and said loudly, "You see? This is where ordinary people live. This is what the Israelis do."

In front of a row of wrecked shopfronts, he declared, "This is revenge against Lebanon, the only country that has shown itself able to defeat Israel." We reached an open area where the buildings had been completely levelled. Naboulsi pointed to some rubble and said, "This is where the Hezbollah Media Relations office used be. Now there's no place for me to work." He claimed that, apart from this and a center for social charity, there hadn't been any Hezbollah offices around there—only civilian targets. He then led the group away from the area where, I had heard, Hezbollah's security headquarters had stood. In Beirut, many people believed that Sheikh Nasrallah was still in the neighborhood, in a bunker, although there were also rumors that he was in Damascus or at the Iranian Embassy.

Naboulsi suddenly yelled, "Jet fighters in the sky!" He urged the journalists to hurry to their cars; the tour was over.

One evening, on a rooftop balcony in the eastern-Beirut district of Ashrafieh, I met with Jamil Mroue, a secular Shiite and the editor of Beirut's English-language newspaper, the *Daily Star*. Mroue, a big, handsome silver-haired man of fifty-six, nursed a glass of whiskey and looked out over the sea, where two gray American destroyers were prowling the Mediterranean. After staring at the ships for a minute, Mroue began to vent his frustration.

"Even after 9/11, there is this expectation in the U.S. and Israel that some unspoken middle class is just sitting there waiting to inherit the ruins of whatever country it is that they are obliterating. But there is no calculation that, if they flatten Lebanon and Nasrallah comes out of hiding and is given a microphone to deliver a speech, he can topple governments. He has been extraordinarily empowered by this. Israel and America are still obsessed with destroying hardware. But if you do this with Hezbollah you just propagate what you want to destroy"—that is, an unmoored fighting force. "Do I want to live under Hezbollah?" he said. "No, I don't. But the same errors that the Americans made in Iraq are the ones being made here. You get rid of Nasrallah not by destroying his guns but by helping to create a sustainable society."

Mroue went on, "In the beginning, in the eighties, Hezbollah controlled the night, but by 2000 it controlled the day, even as the Israeli soldiers were huddled in their bunkers." He said that it was unfair to ask Lebanon's fragile government to do what the Israelis couldn't in their eighteen-year occupation. "Do you want to use a sledgehammer? Well, do you remember the Israeli minister who compared Arabs to lice? Try hitting lice with a sledgehammer!"

Mroue sipped his whiskey and said, "Hezbollah will most likely come out of this with its infrastructure shattered, but then comes the soapbox with the highly cerebral underdog—Nasrallah—and there will be a camera crew there from CNN or Al Arabiya, and he will go on camera and say 'Do this,' and people will."

Mroue's point of view was common not only among secular Shiites but among Christians and Sunnis who normally had little use for Hezbollah yet despaired of the effect of Israel's bombing and the Bush Administration's refusal to rein in the Olmert government.

"Before the war, probably eighty or ninety per cent of Lebanese were against Hezbollah," Mroue said despondently. "But now I'd say it's around fifty, teetering on sixty per cent—in favor." Those numbers were guesses; the breadth and depth of Hezbollah's support is one of the great uncertainties in the crisis. Mroue cited an old Saudi tribal proverb: "If you know the price of a man's ransom, kill him." The ransom was the price that would be exacted by the slain man's tribe in revenge for his death. "In other words, if you know what the costs will be for your actions, and you can afford them, go ahead," Mroue said. "But here, who knows what the price of the ransom is?"

Hussein Rahal runs Hezbollah's information bureau, and, like other Hezbollah officials, he had gone underground. I met him by prearrangement in a borrowed office in a government building. Rahal was a study in gray: he wore a gray suit, had cropped gray hair, and had a gray stubble beard. He was taking the long view. "We have lived in this situation before. All wars end, and when this one does we will be victorious, because we will stand fast, and the situation we have now will be changed. Right now, the neoconservatives, as part of their strategy to reshape the Middle East, are encouraging Israel to escalate its war against Lebanon, which means that the U.S. Administration is taking a leading part in a war, one that the American people have no say in." Rahal paused, and added carefully, "But Hezbollah does not want to cause any harm to the American people." He went on, "The U.S. runs the risk of bringing

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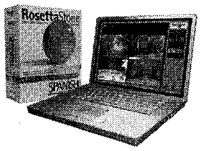

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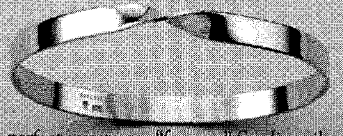
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down the Lebanese state it says it wants to support. And if this happens it could take the whole region into a new stage of the conflict—and who benefits from that?

"War is always two-sided, and you must test both sides' ability to stand fast. We have weapons that we did not have in 1996. The casualties for Israel in a ground war will be very high. And we have only one choice, and that is to survive."

The broadcast facilities of Hezbollah's television station, Al Manar, were bombed—the Israelis consider it the group's most powerful propaganda arm—but it somehow managed to stay on the air. When I asked Ibrahim Mussawi, the editor of foreign news at Al Manar, about the damage the country had sustained, he said, "We've managed with thirty-five billion dollars of national debt"—Lebanon's current debt. "What will it cost to rebuild the new damage? Four, five billion? If we could manage thirty-five, then we can manage forty billion. Bad as it is, maybe some good can come out of this; maybe after this it will be the right time to settle all our problems in Lebanon, all of the 'isms' we are famous for: nepotism, corruptionism." Mussawi seemed to be suggesting that the best solution for Lebanon's ills, when the war was over, was a government led by the Party of God.

For now, it is not clear who is running Lebanon. Rice came to Beirut in part to express support for Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, who came to power after the "Cedar revolution," the mass protests against Syrian interference in Lebanon that followed Hariri's murder. Siniora, a Sunni, had criticized Hezbollah, but was openly in despair about the lack of U.S. support for a ceasefire; in Rome, he called the air war "barbaric."

One politician Rice pointedly snubbed during her visit was the country's President, Émile Lahoud, a Maronite who is widely seen as a tool of Syria. I met with him at the Presidential palace a few hours before Rice arrived. He was deeply tanned, and looked like an older, fleshier version of Tony Blair.

Lahoud told me how pleased he was that I had come to Lebanon to see the "truth" of what was happening. "Unfortunately, Americans have a very erroneous picture," he said. "It's—you know, they have a very strong media. Israel is all over the world."

He spoke vehemently about the "infamy" of the Israeli attacks. "The Israelis said it was because of the taking of two hostages. Well, it is not true. They want to break the infrastructure, because Lebanon is a very big competitor of Israel, from the touristic point of view and with anything—regional trade, finance. So the Israelis don't want Lebanon to prosper." He added, "But the most important reason is that they want to take revenge, because we liberated our land."

I asked Lahoud if he believed, as I had heard other Lebanese say, that Israel wanted to spark a civil war in Lebanon. "Yes," he said. "Israel is happy when Lebanese fight each other." He added, "Washington wants whatever Israel wants, unfortunately. For many reasons. The main one, you know"—Lahoud gave me a knowing look—"the *lobby*, and elections.

"Look, you can see the bombs from here," Lahoud said. He led me to the window, and we looked down at the southern suburbs. A plume of gray smoke was rising rapidly.

On July 27th—the morning after Israel lost nine soldiers in clashes with Hezbollah, and two days after its missiles hit a U.N. outpost, killing four observers—I met a Western diplomat in Beirut. He told me that, while both Hezbollah and Israel had miscalculated, Hezbollah, at this point, had the advantage. "The casualties inflicted by Israel's air campaign play right into Hezbollah's hands. Hezbollah certainly thinks it's winning. Even if it loses popularity among Druze, Sunnis, and Christians, its popularity remains high among Shiites, and for Hezbollah that's all that really counts."

Pointing to his head, he said, "In the end, the battle is between the ears. If, as a result of this, the Lebanese people get sick of Hezbollah, and if they turn on it and disarm it, that would be great." A less favorable scenario was for the fighting to end inconclusively, with Hezbollah allowed to return to its former status. Still, he said, that might at least "show the Lebanese that there are serious consequences for supporting Hezbollah."

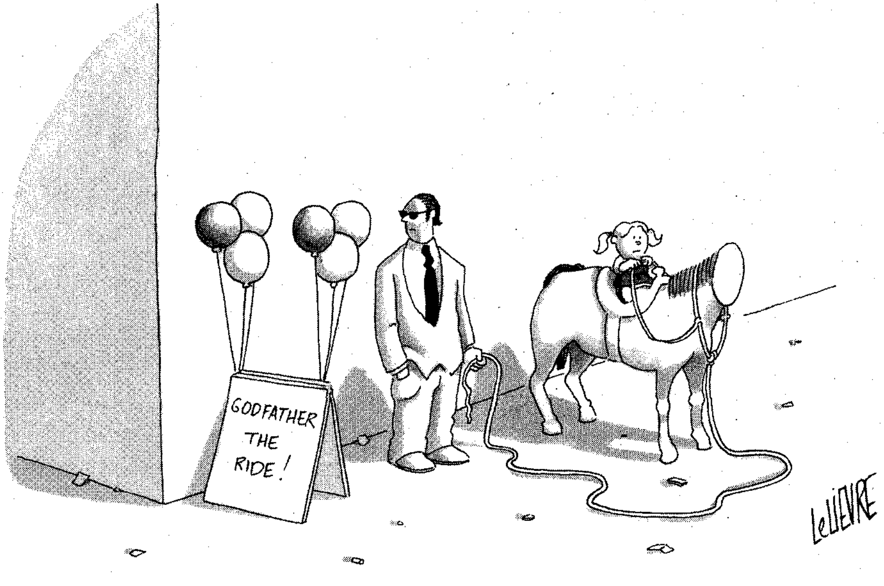
The diplomat said that if anyone had benefitted from the confrontation, it was the government in Tehran. "Iran's role in this has been huge," he said. "I don't know what role, if any, it had in the abductions, but I think it does encourage

Hezbollah's fighting on the border, and its arms shipments have been impressive. Without any cost to Iran, Lebanon is getting devastated, Israel is taking hits, and the Iranians are getting distraction from the nuclear issue. They must be very happy right now."

The degree to which Hezbollah, fortified by its sponsors in Iran and Syria, has constrained Lebanon's political dialogue was brought home to me by Nayla Mouawad, Lebanon's Minister of Social Affairs. Mouawad, a Maronite, is the widow of former President René Mouawad, who was assassinated in 1989, the main suspects being Syria or a domestic political opponent. When I asked about Hezbollah, Mouawad chose her words very carefully. "We thought we needed Hezbollah to be a part of the government, and we gave it ministries to give it confidence to join in the nation-building. We thought that we could not implement a settlement by force, but through national dialogue." Mouawad said that she wanted a ceasefire, but that afterward the Lebanese Army should assume control of the entire country. She was worried about it, though. "Divisions still exist in this country," she said. "If a comprehensive settlement is not implemented, we are going to have problems. There will be people counting their losses—and the losses are tremendous—and looking for someone to blame." She added, "Lebanon is paying the price for Syrian and Iranian interests."

She noted that the Lebanese government agreed with some of Hezbollah's demands, including the return of Shebaa farms and prisoners. "We need to convince Hezbollah that only a strong Lebanese nation and state could preserve its future as a party, as a Lebanese party—not as an armed political faction." Mouawad paused, and said, "I am very much aware that the moment we are living now may be better than the one we are going to live through."

Despite its losses, Hezbollah remains conspicuously in control in Beirut's southern suburbs. Outsiders are stopped and interrogated by men who seem to materialize out of nowhere, riding on motor scooters. A few days after the press tour, I returned to visit an underground refuge for displaced Shiite civilians; a Hezbollah official had approved the visit.



My car pulled up outside the Farms Superstore, a modern supermarket in a concrete-and-glass building. After a round of questioning, I was allowed to proceed but only in the company of a Hezbollah man, who carried a black portfolio. Like most Hezbollah men, he wore a light beard, in the Iranian fashion. He led the way down into the three-level parking garage beneath the store, a vast, clean space of rubberized gray floors and support columns. There were no vehicles in sight; instead, at every other column or so, there were Lebanese families sitting and reclining on reed mats and foam-rubber mattresses. Each family had neat bundles of blankets and plastic bags of clothing and food. A few had electric fans, and one group was gathered around a television. They were mostly women and children, with some older men and teen-age boys; I saw few men in their twenties or thirties. The Hezbollah man said that there were three hundred and sixty families in the garage—approximately two thousand people.

In one corner, children played on swings, a slide, and a small carrousel. Our escort said that Hezbollah had provided the equipment. He added that Hezbollah had set up a clinic and a pharmacy.

As we walked down to the next level, two teen-age boys, who had been squabbling, began throwing punches at one another. The escort grabbed them and sent them away with a reprimand. A few minutes later, we were approached by a young man named Ali. He held the hand of a wide-eyed girl of six or seven. He said he was from the southern town of Marjayoun. "I have been here six days," he said. "I am tired, but I'm not scared." He said that he had volunteered his services to Hezbollah, patrolling the refuge at night, "to see if anyone needs anything." Speaking of the Hezbollah leader, who the night before had made a television appearance, he said, "Sheikh Nasrallah said last night that it will last a long time. So here I am."

A middle-aged woman in a black chador came over. When I asked if she minded living underground, she smiled and said, in a gravelly voice, "It's all the same to me. If Israel and America want to do this to us, all we can do is to bear the situation, so if we have to stay underground we will. We don't mind staying here as long as the boys are O.K."—a reference to Hezbollah's fighters—"and as long as Sheikh Nasrallah is fine. We can bear anything. Death is normal to us, and, anyway, it means we'll go to heaven." She told us that four children had been born in the underground garage. Two were boys, and they had been named Waaed, which means "the promising one," and Sadeq, which means "the truthful one," "because Sheikh Nasrallah says, 'We have the promise of liberating the south.' " She added, "We don't think the Israelis will come to Beirut, but, if they do, we know what to do with them." A young pregnant woman standing next to her laughed and made lunging, stabbing motions with her hand. ♦

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THE BUSH QUIZ: THE TWENTIETH HUNDRED DAYS

BY PAUL SLANSKY

1. Complete George W. Bush's quote: "I believe that my job is _____."

(a) to protect life. And sometimes people have to die in order to protect life, see? And that saddens me.

(b) hard. It's a heckuva hard job. It's difficult. But I'm doin' it, see, and I'm gonna keep on doin' it, because that's the job of a President.

(c) to go out and explain to people what's on my mind. That's why I'm having this press conference, see? I'm telling you what's on my mind. And what's on my mind is winning the war on terror.

(d) to construe the laws I sign in a Presidential way. Because that's part of being a leader, see, is construing with your gut.

2. Who is Peter Wallsten?

(a) The partially blind reporter whom George W. Bush mocked ("Are you going to ask that question with shades on?") for not removing his sunglasses while addressing the President.

(b) The wheelchair-bound senior citizen whom George W. Bush mocked ("You look mighty comfortable") for not standing in the presence of the President.

(c) The C.I.A. employee who, after delivering the "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." briefing, was told by George W. Bush, "All right, you've covered your ass now."

(d) The Iraq-war amputee with whom George W. Bush tried to bond by telling him about a scratch he got during "combat with a cedar" while clearing brush.

Match the number with what it quantifies.

3. At least 30,000. 5. Zero.
4. More than 5,000. 6. Around 200.

(a) Dollars' worth of merchandise that the former Bush domestic-policy adviser Claude Allen was alleged to have stolen from Target and other stores through a phony refund scam.

(b) Shotgun pellets embedded in the face and upper body of Harry Whittington by Dick Cheney.

(c) National monuments or icons that Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff said there are in New York City.

(d) dollars donated by Barbara Bush to a hurricane relief fund with the stipulation that the money be spent on software bought from a company run by her son Neil.

7. Complete George W. Bush's quote: "Nobody likes _______."

(a) it when the press commits treason.

(b) being lied to.

(c) Osama bin Laden except the Democrats.

(d) beheadings.

8. Three of these remarks were made by George W. Bush. Which one was made by Donald Rumsfeld?

(a) "Nobody likes war. It creates a sense of—of uncertainty in the country."

(b) "The plan [in Iraq] is to prevent a civil war, and, to the extent one were to occur, to have the, from a security standpoint, have the Iraqi security forces deal with it to the extent they're able to."

(c) "Sometimes leaders show up who do a great disservice to the traditions and people of a country."

(d) "There are limits to how much corn can be used for ethanol. After all, we got to eat some."

Who's who?

9. John Green.
10. James B. Comey.
11. James E. Hansen.
12. Harry Taylor.

(a) The "Good Morning America" producer who was suspended after e-mails he sent, including one in which he wrote, "Bush makes me sick," were leaked.

(b) The NASA official who said, "It seems more like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union than the United States," after the Administration began censoring climate scientists who tried to speak about global warming.

(c) The Justice Department official who refused to authorize the National Security Agency's domestic surveillance program.

(d) The questioner at a Charlotte event who told George W. Bush, "I would hope, from time to time, that you have the humility and the grace to be ashamed of yourself."

13. How did Dick Cheney say that the September 11th attacks might have been prevented?

(a) If George W. Bush's father had taken out Saddam Hussein in 1991.

(b) If the Bush Administration had been able to eavesdrop on the hijackers' phone conversations without court orders.

(c) If the National Security Agency hadn't waited until September 12th to translate two messages warning of the attacks which had been intercepted on September 10th.

(d) If even one of the F.B.I. agent Harry Samit's more than seventy warnings that Zacarias Moussaoui was a terrorist had been heeded.

14. Three of these remarks were made by George W. Bush. Which one was made by Dick Cheney?

(a) "I do want to give you some thoughts about what I'm thinking about."

(b) "They ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English."

(c) "We have all the legal authority we need."

(d) "When you turn on your TV screen and see innocent people die day in and day out, it affects the mentality of our country."

15. What pair of men did George W. Bush refer to as an "interesting cat" and a "dangerous dude"?

(a) The Iraqi Defense Minister and the Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

(b) Elvis Presley and "Colonel" Tom Parker, during the guided tour of Graceland that Bush gave to Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

(c) Owen Wilson and Matt Dillon, after a special White House screening of "You, Me and Dupree."

16. What was George W. Bush talking about when he declared, "I'm the decider, and I decide what's best"?

(a) Pushing ahead with the Dubai ports deal despite not having known about it until it appeared in the media.

(b) Blocking a Justice Department probe of the Administration's secret domestic spying operation.

(c) Keeping Donald Rumsfeld as Defense Secretary despite calls by six retired generals for his firing.

(d) Vetoing a stem-cell-research bill.

17. What did George W. Bush say was "the best moment" during his years in the White House?

(a) "The first day I sat at my desk in the Oval Office and thought about all the history that happened there and realized that now it was my turn."

(b) "When I caught a seven-and-a-half-pound largemouth bass on my lake."

(c) "When they told me we caught Saddam in his hidey-hole."

18. True or false: When Tim Russert, the host of "Meet the Press," said that "there were a lot of misjudgments made" regarding Iraq, his guest Condoleezza Rice pointed out, "There are also some misjudgments that were not made."

19. Which of these words were among the top ten responses in a Pew Research Center poll that asked voters for the first word that came to mind when they think about George W. Bush?

(a) "Decisive," "charming," "brilliant," and "truthful."

(b) "Booze," "cocaine," "failure," and "smirk."

(c) "Illegitimate," "simian," "hotheaded," and "torture."

(d) "Incompetent," "idiot," "liar," and "ass."

Answers:
(1) c (2) a (3) d (4) a (5) c (6) b (7) d (8) b
(9) a (10) c (11) b (12) d (13) b (14) c (15) a
(16) c (17) b (18) True (19) d.

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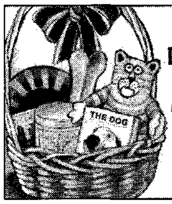

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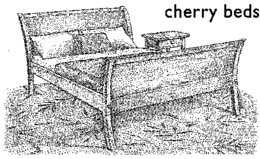
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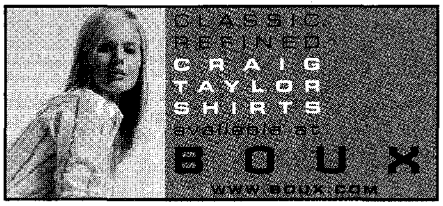
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AMATEUR HOUR

Journalism without journalists.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

On the Internet, everybody is a millenarian. Internet journalism, according to those who produce manifestos on its behalf, represents a world-historical development—not so much because of the expressive power of the new medium as because of its accessibility to producers and consumers. That permits it to break the long-standing choke hold on public information and discussion that the traditional media—usually known, when this argument is made, as "gatekeepers" or "the priesthood"—have supposedly been able to maintain up to now. "Millions of Americans who were once in awe of the punditocracy now realize that anyone can do this stuff—and that many unknowns can do it better than the lords of the profession," Glenn Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor who operates one of the leading blogs, Instapundit, writes, typically, in his new book, "An Army of Davids: How Markets and Technology Empower Ordinary People to Beat Big Media, Big Government and Other Goliaths."

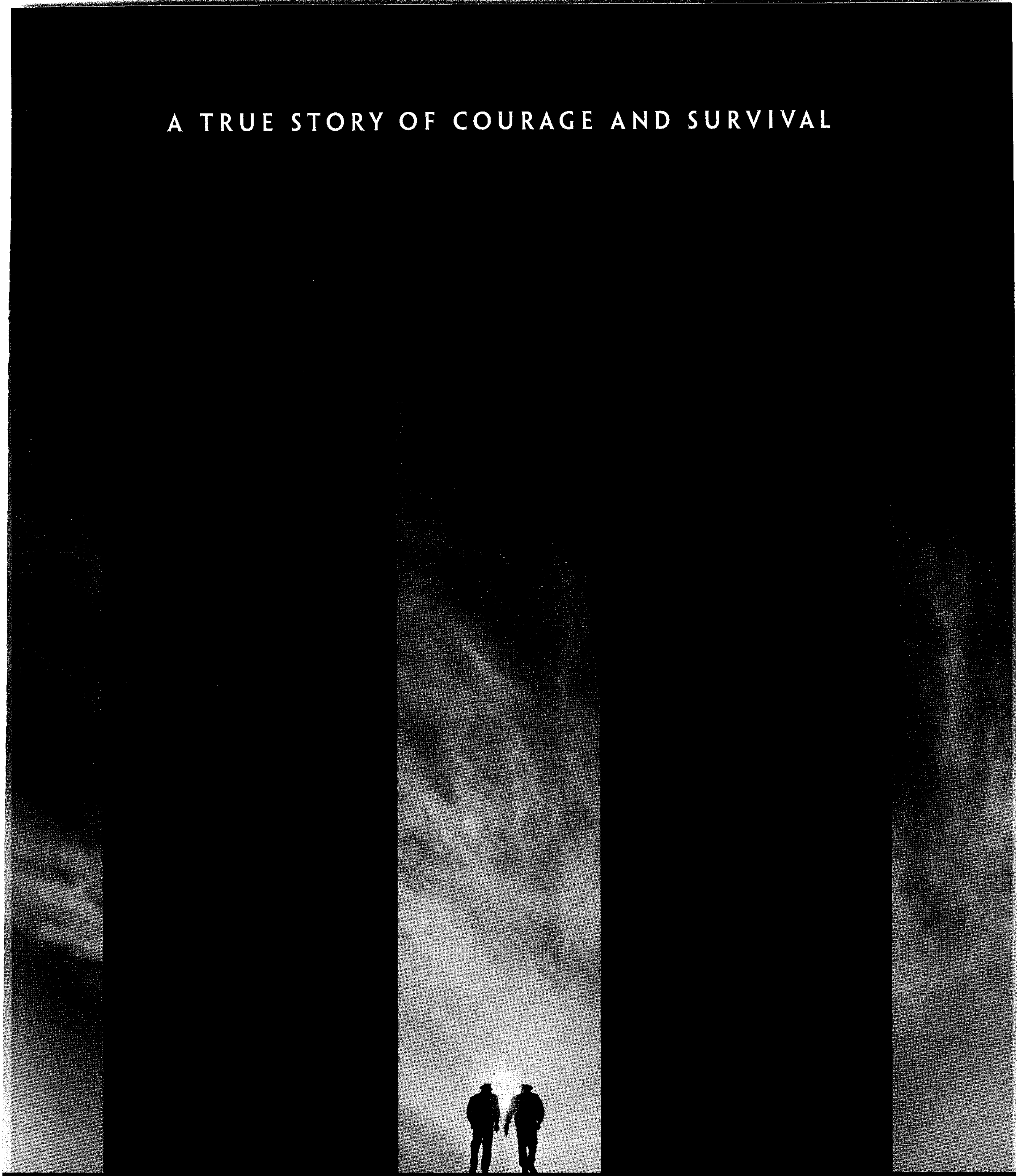
Big claims have been made for the Internet's democratizing influence on the media, but it's not clear that the results measure up.

BARRY BLITT

The rhetoric about Internet journalism produced by Reynolds and many others is plausible only because it conflates several distinct categories of material that are widely available online and didn't use to be. One is pure opinion, especially political opinion, which the Internet has made infinitely easy to purvey. Another is information originally published in other media—everything from Chilean newspaper stories and entries in German encyclopedias to papers presented at Micronesian conferences on accounting methods—which one can find instantly on search and aggregation sites. Lately, grand journalistic claims have been made on behalf of material produced specifically for Web sites by people who don't have jobs with news organizations. According to a study published last month by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, there are twelve million bloggers in the United States, and thirty-four per cent of them consider blogging to be a form of journalism. That would add up to more than four million newly minted journalists just among the ranks of American bloggers. If you add everyone abroad, and everyone who practices other forms of Web journalism, the profession must have increased in size a thousandfold over the last decade.

As the Pew study makes clear, most bloggers see themselves as engaging only in personal expression; they don't inspire the biggest claims currently being made for Internet journalism. The category that inspires the most soaring rhetoric about supplanting traditional news organizations is "citizen journalism," meaning sites that publish contributions of people who don't have jobs with news organizations but are performing a similar function.

Citizen journalists are supposedly inspired amateurs who find out what's going on in the places where they live and work, and who bring us a fuller, richer picture of the world than we get from familiar news organizations, while sparing us the pomposity and preening that journalists often display. Hong Eun-taek, the editor-in-chief of perhaps the biggest citizen-journalism site, Oh My News, which is based in Seoul and has a staff of editors managing about forty thousand volunteer contributors, has posted a brief manifesto, which says, "Traditional means of news gathering and dissemination are quickly falling behind the new paradigm. . . . We believe



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news is something that is made not only by a George W. Bush or a Bill Gates but, more importantly, by people who are all allowed to think together. The news is a form of collective thinking. It is the ideas and minds of the people that are changing the world, when they are heard."

That's the catechism, but what has citizen journalism actually brought us? It's a difficult question, in part because many of the truest believers are very good at making life unpleasant for doubters, through relentless sneering. Thus far, no "traditional journalist" has been silly enough to own up to and defend the idea of belonging to an élite from which ordinary citizens are barred. But sometimes one will unwittingly toss a chunk of red meat to the new-media visionaries by appearing not to accord the Internet revolution the full measure of respect it deserves—as John Markoff, a technology reporter for the *Times,* did in 2003 in an interview with *Online Journalism Review.* Jeff Jarvis, a veteran editor, publisher, and columnist, and, starting in September, a professor at the City University of New York's new journalism school, posted the interview on his blog, BuzzMachine, with his own post-facto reactions added, so that it reads, in part, this way:

> MARKOFF: I certainly can see that scenario, where all these new technologies may only be good enough to destroy all the old standards but not create something better to replace them with. I think that's certainly one scenario.
>
> JARVIS: Pardon me for interrupting, but that made no frigging sense whatsoever. Can you parse that for me, Mr. Markoff? Or do you need an editor to speak sense? How do new standards "destroy" old standards? Something won't become a "standard" unless it is accepted by someone in power—the publishers or the audiences. This isn't a game of PacMan.
>
> MARKOFF: The other possibility right now—it sometimes seems we have a world full of bloggers and that blogging is the future of journalism, or at least that's what the bloggers argue, and to my mind, it's not clear yet whether blogging is anything more than CB radio.
>
> JARVIS: The reference is as old-farty and out-of-date as the sentiment. It's clear that Markoff isn't reading weblogs and doesn't know what's there.
>
> Hey, fool, that's your *audience* talking there. You should want to listen to what they have to say. You are, after all, spending your living writing for *them.* If you were a reporter worth a damn, you'd care to know what the marketplace cares about. But, no, you're the mighty NYT guy. You don't need no stinking audience. You don't need ears. You only need a mouth.

STORM

On the last night of our house arrest
a howling wind tore through the streets,
ripping down shutters, scattering roof tiles,
leaving behind a river of refuse. When the sun
rose over the marble gate, I could see the guards,
sluggish in the morning heat, desert their posts
and stagger toward the woods just out of town.
"Darling," I said, "let's go, the guards have left,
the place is a ruin." But she was oblivious.
"You go," she said, and she pulled up the sheet
to cover her eyes. I ran downstairs and called
for my horse. "To the sea," I whispered, and off
we went and how quick we were, my horse and I,
riding over the fresh green fields, as if to our freedom.

—*Mark Strand*

To live up to its billing, Internet journalism has to meet high standards both conceptually and practically: the medium has to be revolutionary, and the journalism has to be good. The quality of Internet journalism is bound to improve over time, especially if more of the virtues of traditional journalism migrate to the Internet. But, although the medium has great capabilities, especially the way it opens out and speeds up the discourse, it is not quite as different from what has gone before as its advocates are saying.

Societies create structures of authority for producing and distributing knowledge, information, and opinion. These structures are always waxing and waning, depending not only on the invention of new means of communication but also on political, cultural, and economic developments. An interesting new book about this came out last year in Britain under the daunting title "Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture." It is set in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and although its author, Mark Knights, who teaches at the University of East Anglia, does not make explicit comparisons to the present, it seems obvious that such comparisons are on his mind.

The "new media" of later Stuart Britain were pamphlets and periodicals, made possible not only by the advent of the printing press but by the relaxation of government censorship and licensing regimes, by political unrest, and by urbanization (which created audiences for public debate). Today, the best known of the periodicals is Addison and Steele's *Spectator*, but it was one of dozens that proliferated almost explosively in the early seventeen-hundreds, including *The Tatler, The Post Boy, The Medley*, and *The British Apollo.* The most famous of the pamphleteers was Daniel Defoe, but there were hundreds of others, including Thomas Sprat, the author of "A True Account and Declaration of the Horrid Conspiracy Against the Late King" (1685), and Charles Leslie, the author of "The Wolf Stript of His Shepherd's Cloathing" (1704). These voices entered a public conversation that had been narrowly restricted, mainly to holders of official positions in church and state. They were the bloggers and citizen journalists of their day, and their influence was far greater (though their audiences were far smaller) than what anybody on the Internet has yet achieved.

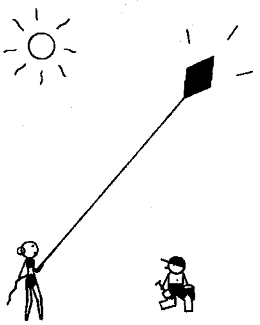
As media, Knights points out, both pamphlets and periodicals were radically transformative in their capabilities. Pamphlets were a mass medium with a short lead time—cheap, transportable, and easily accessible to people of all classes and political inclinations. They were, as Knights puts it, "capable of assuming different forms (letters, dialogues, essays, refutations, vindications, and so on)" and, he adds, were "ideally suited to making a public statement at a particular moment." Periodicals were, by the standards of the day, "a sort of interactive entertainment," because of the invention of letters to the editor and because publications were constantly responding to their readers and to one another.

Then as now, the new media in their fresh youth produced a distinctive, hot-tempered rhetorical style. Knights writes, "Polemical print . . . challenged conventional notions of how rhetoric worked and was a medium that facilitated slander, polemic, and satire. It delighted in mocking or even abusive criticism, in part because of the conventions of anonymity." But one of Knights's most useful observations is that this was a self-limiting phenomenon. Each side in what Knights understands, properly, as the media front in a merciless political struggle between Whigs and Tories soon began accusing the other of trafficking in lies, distortions, conspiracy theories, and special pleading, and presenting itself as the avatar of the public interest, civil discourse, and epistemologically derived truth. Knights sees this genteeler style of expression as just another political tactic, but it nonetheless drove print publication toward a more reasoned, less inflamed rhetorical stance, which went along with a partial settling down of British politics from hot war between the parties to cold. (Full-dress British newspapers, like the *Times* and the *Guardian*, did not emerge until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, well into this calmer period and long after Knights ends his story.) At least in part, Internet journalism will surely repeat the cycle, and will begin to differentiate itself tonally, by trying to sound responsible and trustworthy in the hope of building a larger, possibly paying audience.

American journalism began, roughly speaking, on the later Stuart Britain model; during Colonial times it was dominated by fiery political speechmakers, like Thomas Paine. All those uplifting statements by the Founders about freedom of the press were almost certainly produced with pamphleteers in mind. When, in the early nineteenth century, political parties and fast cylinder printing presses developed, American journalism became mainly a branch of the party system, with very little pretense to neutral authority or ownership of the facts.

A related development was the sensational penny press, which served the big cities, whose populations were swollen with immigrants from rural America and abroad. It produced powerful local newspapers, but it's hard to think of them as fitting the priesthood model. William Randolph Hearst's New York papers, the leading examples, were flamboyant, populist, opinionated, and thoroughly disreputable. They influenced politics, but that is different from saying, as Glenn Reynolds says of the Hearst papers, that they "set the agenda for public discussion." Most of the formal means of generating information that are familiar in America today—objective journalism is only one; others are modern academic research, professional licensing, and think tanks—were created, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, explicitly to counter the populist inclinations of various institutions, one of which was the big media.

In fact, what the prophets of Internet journalism believe themselves to be fighting against—journalism in the hands of an enthroned few, who speak in a voice of phony, unearned authority to the passive masses—is, as a historical phenomenon, mainly a straw man. Even after the Second World War, some American cities still had several furiously battling papers, on the model of "The Front Page." There were always small political magazines of all persuasions, and books written in the spirit of the old pamphlets, and, later in the twentieth century, alternative weeklies and dissenting journalists like I. F. Stone. When journalism was at its most blandly authoritative—probably in the period when the three television broadcast networks were in their heyday and local newspaper monopoly was beginning to become the rule—so were American politics and culture, and you have to be very media-centric to believe that the press established the tone of national life rather than vice versa.



Every new medium generates its own set of personalities and forms. Internet journalism is a huge tent that encompasses sites from traditional news organizations; Web-only magazines like *Slate* and *Salon*; sites like Daily Kos and NewsMax, which use some notional connection to the news to function as influential political actors; and aggregation sites (for instance, Arts & Letters Daily and Indy Media) that bring together an astonishingly wide range of disparate material in a particular category. The more ambitious blogs, taken together, function as a form of fast-moving, densely cross-referential pamphleteering—an open forum for every conceivable opinion that can't make its way into the big media, or, in the case of the millions of purely personal blogs, simply an individual's take on life. The Internet is also a venue for press criticism ("We can fact-check your ass!" is one of the familiar rallying cries of the blogosphere) and a major research library of bloopers, outtakes, pranks, jokes, and embarrassing performances by big shots. But none of that yet rises to the level of a journalistic culture rich enough to compete in a serious way with the old media—to function as a replacement rather than an addendum.

The most fervent believers in the transforming potential of Internet journalism are operating not only on faith in its achievements, even if they lie mainly in the future, but on a certainty that the old media, in selecting what to publish and broadcast, make horrible and, even worse, ignobly motivated mistakes. They are politically biased, or they are ignoring or suppressing important stories, or they are out of touch with ordinary people's concerns, or they are merely passive transmitters of official utterances. The more that traditional journalism appears to be an old-fashioned captive press, the more providential the Internet looks.

Jay Rosen, a professor of journalism at New York University who was the leading champion of "civic journalism" even before there was an Internet, wrote in the Washington *Post* in June that he started his blog, PressThink, because "I was tired of passing my ideas through editors who forced me to observe the silences they kept as professional journalists. The day after President Bush was re-elected in 2004, I suggested on my blog that at least some news organizations should consider themselves the opposition to the White House. Only by going into opposition, I argued, could the press really tell the story of the Bush administration's vast expansion of executive power. That notion simply hadn't been discussed in mainstream newsrooms, which had always been able to limit debate about what is and isn't the job of the journalist. But now that amateurs had joined pros in the press zone, newsrooms couldn't afford not to debate their practices."

In PressThink, Rosen now has the forum that he didn't before; and last week he announced the launch of a new venture, called NewAssignment.Net, in which a "smart mob" of donors would pay journalists to pursue "stories the regular news media doesn't do, can't do, wouldn't do, or already screwed up." The key to the idea, in Rosen's mind, is to give "people formerly known as the audience" the assigning power previously reserved for editors. "NewAssignment.Net would be a case of journalism without the media," he wrote on PressThink. "That's the beauty part."

Even before the advent of NewAssignment.Net, and even for people who don't blog, there is a lot more opportunity to talk back to news organizations than there used to be. In their Internet versions, most traditional news organizations make their reporters available to answer readers' questions and, often, permit readers to post their own material. Being able to see this as the advent of true democracy in what had been a media oligarchy makes it much easier to argue that Internet journalism has already achieved great things.

Still: Is the Internet a mere safety valve, a *salon des refusés*, or does it actually produce original information beyond the realm of opinion and comment? It ought to raise suspicion that we so often hear the same menu of examples in support of its achievements: bloggers took down the 2004 "60 Minutes" report on President Bush's National Guard service and, with it, Dan Rather's career; bloggers put Trent Lott's remarks in apparent praise of the Jim Crow era front and center, and thereby deposed him as Senate majority leader.

The best original Internet journalism happens more often by accident, when smart and curious people with access to means of communication are at the scene of a sudden disaster. Any time that big news happens unexpectedly, or in remote and dangerous places, there is more raw information available right away on the Internet than through established news organizations. The most memorable photographs of the London terrorist bombing last summer were taken by subway riders using cell phones, not by news photographers, who didn't have time to get there. There were more ordinary people than paid reporters posting information when the tsunami first hit South Asia, in 2004, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, in 2005, and when Israeli bombs hit Beirut this summer. I am in an especially good position to appreciate the benefits of citizen journalism at such moments, because it helped save my father and stepmother's lives when they were stranded in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina: the citizen portions of the Web sites of local news organizations were, for a crucial day or two, one of the best places to get information about how to drive out of the city. But, over time, the best information about why the hurricane destroyed so much of the city came from reporters, not citizens.

Eyewitness accounts and information-sharing during sudden disasters are welcome, even if they don't provide a complete report of what is going on in a particular situation. And that is what citizen journalism is supposed to do: keep up with public affairs, especially locally, year in and year out, even when there's no disaster. Citizen journalists bear a heavy theoretical load. They ought to be fanning out like a great army, covering not just what professional journalists cover, as well or better, but also much that they ignore. Great citizen journalism is like the imagined Northwest Passage—it has to exist in order to prove that citizens can learn about public life without the mediation of professionals. But when one reads it, after having been exposed to the buildup, it is nearly impossible not to think, *This* is what all the fuss is about?

Oh My News seems to attract far more readers than any other citizen-journalism site—about six hundred thousand daily by its own count. One day in June, readers of the English-language edition found this lead story: "Printable Robots: Advances in Inkjet Technology Forecast Robotic Origami," by Gregory Daigle. It begins:

> From the diminutive ASIMO from Honda to the colossus in the animated film *Iron Giant*, kids around the world know that robots are cool yet complex machines. Advances in robotics, fuel plans from NASA that read like science fiction movie scripts.
>
> Back on Earth, what can we expect over the next few years in robot technology for the consumer?
>
> Reprogram your Roomba? Boring.
>
> Hack your Aibo robot dog? Been there.
>
> Print your own robot? Whoa!

On the same day, Barista of Bloomfield Avenue, the nom de Web of Debbie Galant, who lives in a suburban town in New Jersey and is one of the most esteemed "hyperlocal bloggers" in the country, led with a picture from her recent vacation in the Berkshires. The next item was "Hazing Goes Loony Tunes," and here it is in its entirety:

> Word on the sidewalk is that Glen Ridge officialdom pretty much defeated the class of 2007 in the annual senior-on-freshman hazing ritual yesterday by making the rising seniors stay after school for several minutes in order to give freshmen a head start to run home. We have reports that seniors in cars, once released from school, searched for slow-moving freshman prey, while Glen Ridge police officers in cars closely tracked any cars decorated with class of 2007 regalia. Of course, if any freshman got pummelled with mayonnaise, we want to know about it.

What is generally considered to be the most complete local citizen-journalism site in the United States, the Northwest Voice, in Bakersfield, California (which also has a print version and is owned by the big daily paper in town), led with a story called "A Boost for Business Women," which began:

> So long, Corporate World.
>
> Hello, business ownership—family time, and happiness.
>
> At least, that's how Northwest resident Jennifer Meadors feels after the former commercial banking professional started her own business for Arbonne International, a skin care company, about eight months ago. So far, it's been successful, professionally and personally.

Another much praised citizen-journalism site is Backfence.com, headquartered in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. Last month, it sponsored a contest to pick the two best citizen-journalism stories; the prize was a free trip to a conference held by Oh My News, in Seoul. One winner was Liz Milner, of Reston, Virginia, for a story that began this way:

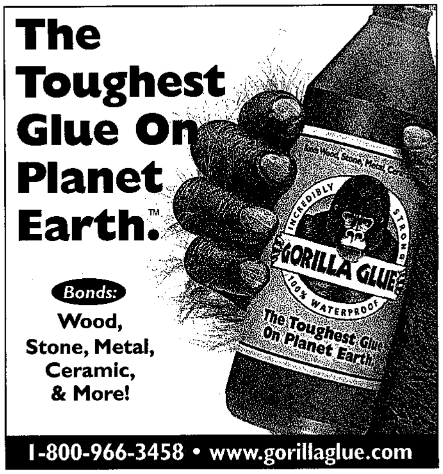
> Among the many definitions of "hero" given in The American Heritage Dictionary is "A person noted for special achievement in a particular field." Reston is a community of creative people, so it seems only right that our heroes should be paragons of creativity. Therefore, I'm nominating Reston musician and freelance writer, Ralph Lee Smith for the post of "Local Hero, Creative Category."
>
> Through his performances, recordings, writings teaching and museum exhibitions, this 78-year-old Reston resident has helped bring new life to an art form that had been on the verge of extinction—the art of playing the mountain dulcimer. He has helped to popularize the repertoire for this instrument so that now mountain music is everywhere—even in slick Hollywood films.

In other words, the content of most citizen journalism will be familiar to anybody who has ever read a church or community newsletter—it's heartwarming and it probably adds to the store of good things in the world, but it does not mount the collective challenge to power which the traditional media are supposedly too timid to take up. Often the most journalistically impressive material on one of the "hyperlocal" citizen-journalism sites has links to professional journalism, as in the Northwest Voice, or Chi-Town Daily News, where much of the material is written by students at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, who are in training to take up full-time jobs in news organizations. At the highest level of journalistic achievement, the reporting that revealed the civil-liberties encroachments of the war on terror, which has upset the Bush Administration, has come from old-fashioned big-city newspapers and television networks, not Internet journalists; day by day, most independent accounts of world events have come from the same traditional sources. Even at its best and most ambitious, citizen journalism reads like a decent Op-Ed page, and not one that offers daring, brilliant, forbidden opinions that would otherwise be unavailable. Most citizen journalism reaches very small and specialized audiences and is proudly minor in its concerns. David Weinberger, another advocate of new-media journalism, has summarized the situation with a witty play on Andy Warhol's maxim: "On the Web, everyone will be famous to fifteen people."

Reporting—meaning the tradition by which a member of a distinct occupational category gets to cross the usual bounds of geography and class, to go where important things are happening, to ask powerful people blunt and impertinent questions, and to report back, reliably and in plain language, to a general audience—is a distinctive, fairly recent invention. It probably started in the United States, in the mid-nineteenth century, long after the Founders wrote the First Amendment. It has spread—and it continues to spread—around the world. It is a powerful social tool, because it provides citizens with an independent source of information about the state and other holders of power. It sounds obvious, but reporting requires reporters. They don't have to be priests or gatekeepers or even paid professionals; they just have to go out and do the work.

The Internet is not unfriendly to reporting; potentially, it is the best reporting medium ever invented. A few places, like the site on Yahoo! operated by Kevin Sites, consistently offer good journalism that has a distinctly Internet, rather than repurposed, feeling. To keep pushing in that direction, though, requires that we hold up original reporting as a virtue and use the Internet to find new ways of presenting fresh material—which, inescapably, will wind up being produced by people who do that full time, not "citizens" with day jobs.

Journalism is not in a period of maximal self-confidence right now, and the Internet's cheerleaders are practically laboratory specimens of maximal self-confidence. They have got the rhetorical upper hand; traditional journalists answering their challenges often sound either clueless or cowed and apologetic. As of now, though, there is not much relation between claims for the possibilities inherent in journalist-free journalism and what the people engaged in that pursuit are actually producing. As journalism moves to the Internet, the main project ought to be moving reporters there, not stripping them away. ♦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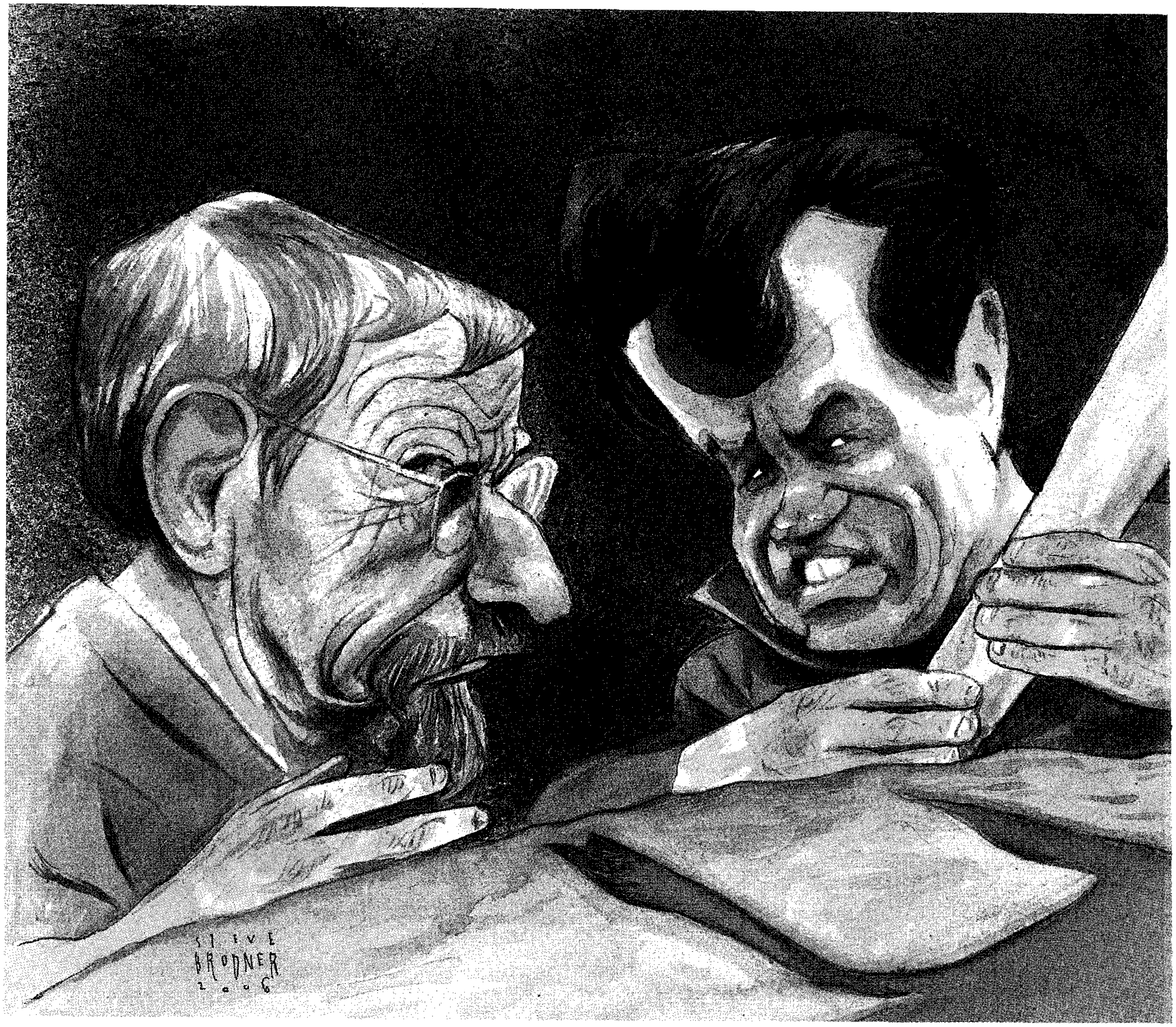


STEVE BRODNER

A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE ATOMIC EMPORIUM

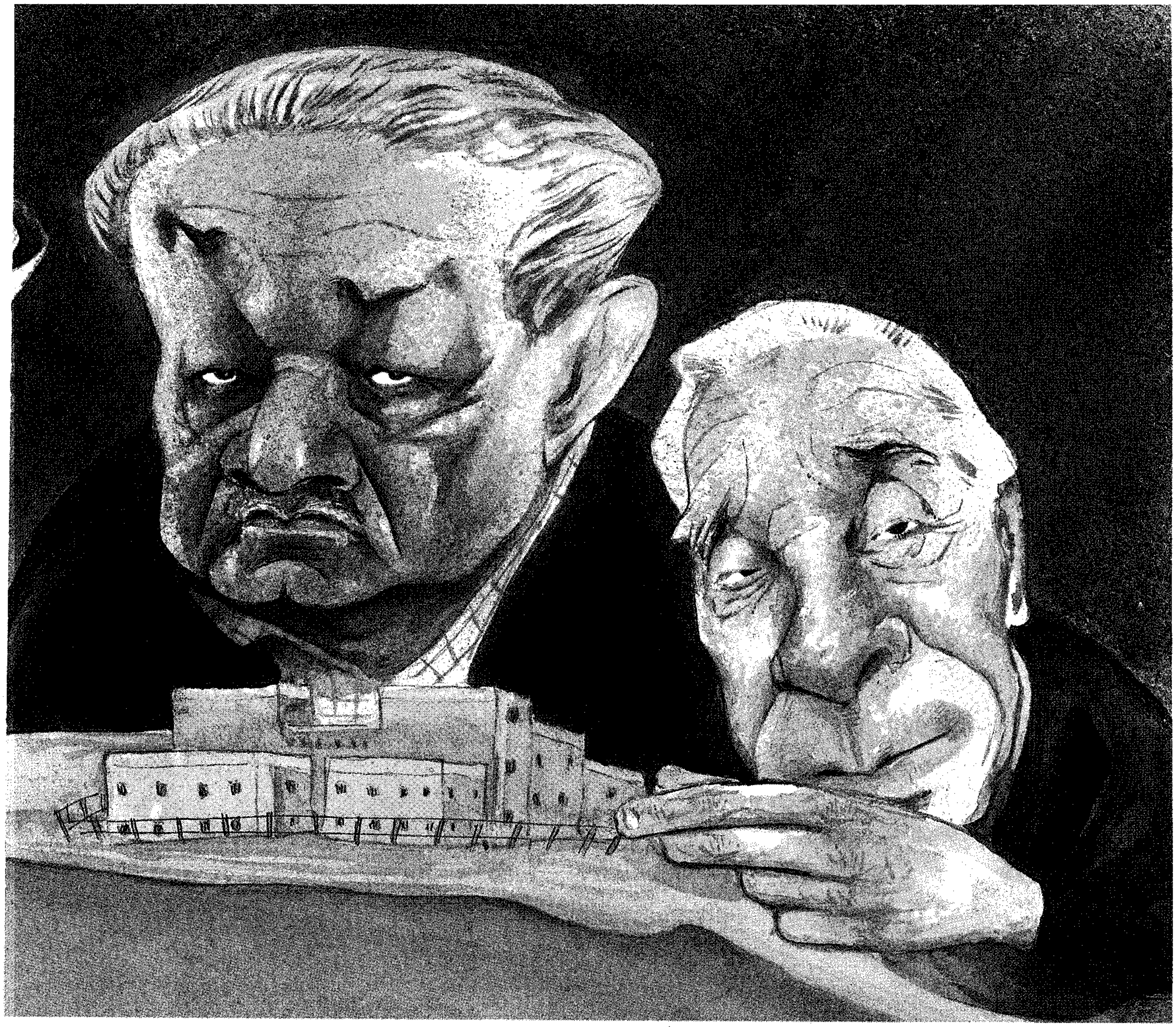
Abdul Qadeer Khan and Iran's race to build the bomb.

BY STEVE COLL

Gotthard Lerch is a big man with a flattened nose and a bulky face, and, were it not for his meticulously pressed clothing, he might be taken for a brawler. Until recently, Lerch was a successful engineer and salesman. He owns a house in Switzerland, another in Germany, and investment property in South Africa, and he has a bank account in Monaco, part of a fortune estimated by German prosecutors to run into many millions of dollars. He achieved this by specializing in the manufacture and assembly of certain industrial vacuum systems, which, among other things, happen to be useful to countries that wish to acquire nuclear weapons.

Lerch, who is sixty-three, was on trial this summer in Mannheim, Germany, on charges that he collaborated with the Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan in illegal sales of nuclear equipment. Lerch has never been convicted of a crime, but records in this and related court cases, some dating to the nineteen-eighties, describe travel and business transactions that trace the looping trail of global nuclear proliferation since the late-Cold War period—from Europe to the Indian subcontinent and from South Africa to the Middle East.

Lerch's trial began in March in Mannheim's *Landgericht*, or regional courthouse, a fortress of poured concrete



and rusting steel, across the avenue from a Baroque palace. On the days that I attended, Lerch sat at the defense table in courtroom No. 2, his arms often folded across his chest, a thick binder lying closed before him. Although he had been incarcerated in the Mannheim jail, his skin remained tawny and smooth, as if he had managed to touch up his tan while behind bars. Each day, he arrived by a side entrance, wearing the same three-button pewter-colored sports coat, checked shirt, and gray dotted tie. His face often bore a thin smile.

In the winter of 2003, after an Iranian opposition group revealed two previously secret nuclear complexes, the Tehran government admitted for the first time that it had been carrying out a program to enrich uranium. Iran's President at the time, Mohammad Khatami, said that the sites served a peaceful nuclear-power program—to generate electricity—but the Bush Administration and some of its European allies emphasized that the facilities could also be used to make weapons. After this disclosure, Iranian officials met periodically with inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to address questions about the program; they named Gotthard Lerch as one of their former business contacts. This and other fragments of evidence have led investigators in Europe to speculate that Lerch may be able to clarify two of the most pressing questions in international affairs; namely, how much technical progress has Iran made, and, therefore, how long will it be before Iran's Islamic revolutionary government has the option to build a nuclear bomb?

European leaders and President Bush have said that they consider Iran's acquisition of a nuclear weapon to be unacceptable. A nuclear Iran would certainly change the strategic balance in the Middle East. Some analysts fear that Iran's achievement might lead nearby Arab countries to pursue nuclear arms; they also worry that a nuclear arsenal might embolden Iran's leaders to increase attacks against Israel or the United States through proxy forces, such as the Lebanese militia Hezbollah. On May 31st, the Bush Administration

Khan (standing over the Natanz nuclear facility) and, from left, Daniel Geiges, Gotthard Lerch, and Peter Griffin.

offered to negotiate directly with Iran about its nuclear program, under certain conditions, but when Iran's leaders failed to respond quickly enough the issue was sent to the United Nations Security Council. How long any period of diplomacy may last—and whether the Administration will revive serious consideration of military action designed to cripple Iran's nuclear program—may depend on how long Bush and his advisers believe it will take Iran to assemble a bomb.

The answer hinges in part on what kinds of uranium-enrichment equipment Iran has acquired since it began its program, what components and support systems it has learned to make on its own, and how many of its outside suppliers may still be hidden. John Negroponte, the director of National Intelligence, has publicly estimated that Iran will not become a nuclear power before the beginning of the next decade, at the earliest. Senator Pat Roberts, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in an interview that, based on the information provided to his committee, Iran was at least "five to seven" years away.

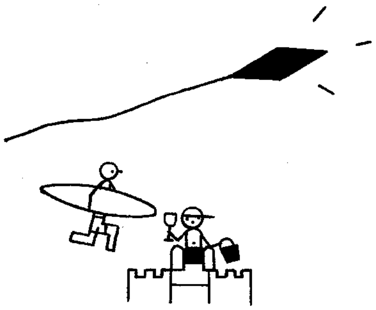
Some independent specialists on Iran's nuclear program are concerned that Iran might be able to move faster than Negroponte has estimated. Graham Allison, a Harvard University professor who worked on nuclear-weapons issues at the Defense Department during the Clinton Administration, declared in a paper published in June, "The American intelligence community may be seriously underestimating Iran's progress toward a nuclear bomb." One problem in making an accurate forecast is that some of the past dealings with Iran by alleged associates of A. Q. Khan, including Gotthard Lerch, remain opaque. A senior Bush Administration official who has studied Iran's contacts with Khan and his collaborators acknowledged, "There are just major things that we don't know."

In a statement that Lerch gave to German investigators almost two years ago, parts of which were read out during his trial, he said that he had been to Iran twice, but that his travel had nothing to do with uranium enrichment. "He has done it in a very smart way, because there's not very much trace," an investigator in Europe said. "This is still open for us—you know, what did he really do?"

The focus of Lerch's case is not Iran but a separate enterprise, to supply Libya with nuclear equipment. According to the German government's indictment, Lerch, beginning in the late nineteen-nineties, joined A. Q. Khan and others in a secret plan to manufacture and then ship to Libya a plant to enrich uranium. The scheme collapsed after a tip to American and British intelligence led to a raid on a German freighter, the BBC China, in Italy in October, 2003. Investigators found enough nuclear goods bound for Libya to make a damning case; confronted with the evidence, the country's dictator, Muammar Qaddafi, who had been seeking an accommodation with the United States, agreed to give up all weapons of mass destruction in exchange for an eventual end to economic sanctions. The supplier lists and materials handed over by Libya as part of this grand bargain led prosecutors in Europe, Malaysia, Dubai, and South Africa to arrest about a dozen businessmen who had allegedly worked with A. Q. Khan, including Lerch.

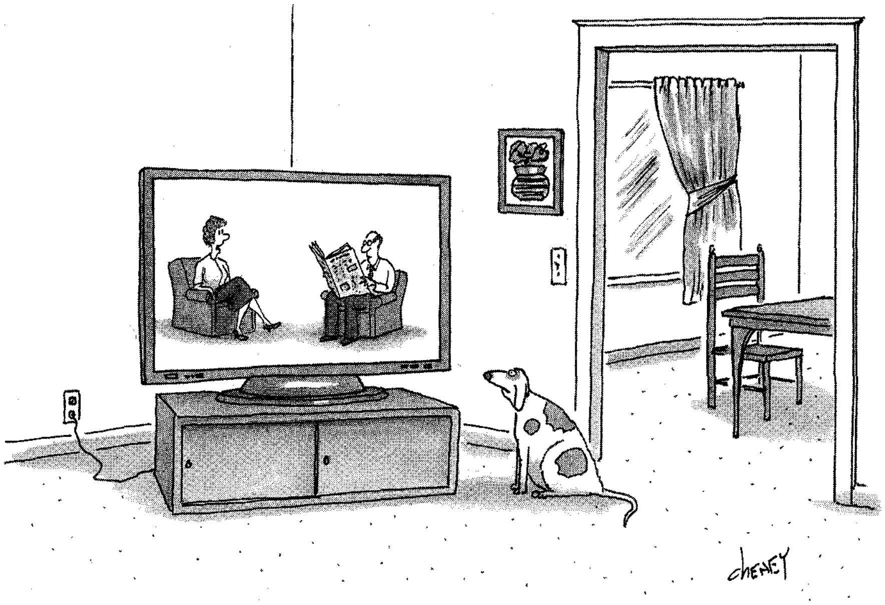
Lerch received about twenty million dollars from Libya, according to German prosecutors, roughly half of which he cleared as profit. Germany is attempting to seize Lerch's money; his lawyers claim that he is innocent. Lerch told German investigators that he was just a businessman who wanted to slow down as he approached retirement. He hoped, he said, to concentrate on his international real-estate investments, particularly in China.

The investigations into Lerch's trading offer a reminder that what professional spies sometimes call the "hard problems" of intelligence collection and analysis are truly daunting. Iran's clandestine procurement network is spread around the world, and the testimony of important witnesses, some of whom have engaged in illicit trading, can rarely be taken at face value. In addition, the underlying questions of nuclear engineering and science are complex.



Iran's nuclear goals have presented themselves at a time when other governments have shown renewed interest in atomic weapons—governments whose nuclear technology, in some cases, is linked by common reliance on supplies from A. Q. Khan and his collaborators. Admissions by Khan and court documents in Europe and South Africa allege that what is now referred to as the Khan network has been in contact with the clandestine or sanctions-evading nuclear programs of at least six countries: India, Pakistan, South Africa, North Korea, Libya, and Iran. (Like Libya, South Africa has abandoned its nuclear-weapons program.) These papers also contain hints of possible contact between Khan and customers whose identities are unknown. His dealings have sometimes involved the same sets of nuclear blueprints, which were first created by European engineers for commercial purposes thirty years ago; the blueprints are still circulating, sold and resold the way contraband court jewels were in earlier centuries. The entrepreneurial engineers who have emerged as agents of nuclear proliferation covet privacy and rarely explain themselves. Yet their motives and beliefs—professional pride, greed, fear of exposure, and, occasionally, political conviction—have had, in cases such as Iran, Libya, and Pakistan, as much influence on the nuclear balance as the decisions of Prime Ministers or Presidents.

In the summer of 2004, Bush declared that the A. Q. Khan network was defunct. "We put them out of business," he said. In fact, Khan's enterprise—dispersed, diverse, and in some respects politically protected—has proved difficult to untangle. The President of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, pardoned Khan after the Libya project was exposed, and has refused to allow I.A.E.A. investigators to question him freely. Khan, who is seventy, has been granted a comfortable, if restricted, retirement on an estate near Islamabad—a well-upholstered form of house arrest. Exchanges with Khan that are controlled by Pakistan's government have produced some insights into his affairs, but they have also left investigators puzzled about a number of important questions, particularly concerning Iran. According to Leonard Weiss, a mathematician who became a specialist on Pakistan's nuclear program during two decades as a Senate staff member, "We don't really know to what extent the Khan network has been rolled up, to what extent new additions to the network have been made."



"Notice anything different?"

Just before noon on a Tuesday in mid-May, I walked from the Mannheim courthouse to the *Hauptbahnhof*, the city's main railway station, to look for Peter Griffin, a retired British businessman. He was due in from his home near Bordeaux, to testify at Lerch's trial. The Mannheim station is a postwar rendering of prewar German railway architecture, and its brightly lit interior shopping mall was crowded. On platform 2, as Griffin had instructed, I waited for train No. 878 from Strasbourg, which passes through Mannheim on its way to Berlin.

We had exchanged cell-phone numbers, but Griffin could not initially remember his own because, as he put it wryly, referring to Britain's main foreign-intelligence service, "MI6 keeps nicking my phones." Like other international businessmen who have had dealings with A. Q. Khan over the years, Griffin has faced intensive scrutiny. Most recently, he said, he was arrested at Britain's Luton airport, in the summer of 2005, and questioned for two days under an antiterrorism law. Griffin, who is seventy, has owned or operated a series of trading companies since the nineteen-seventies, first in Britain and later in Dubai. He has been a subject of periodic British investigations, having to do mainly with exports that he arranged to Pakistan. But he has never been charged with or convicted of any crime.

Griffin had agreed to appear as a witness at Lerch's trial, but he worried that he might be arrested as soon as he reached Germany. The Mannheim court had provided Griffin with a letter of protection, and he had given me a copy, along with a certified English translation, so that, as an independent witness, I would have a record of the promise in case he was seized by the police. The letter seemed a little antiquated, an echo from a time of princely states and private toll roads. "Court Order—at the same time *letter of safe conduct*," the official translation said. "During the said period of time it is not permitted to apprehend or arrest the witness for a possible involvement in the charges specified in the above-mentioned indictment."

As a guarantee, it seemed less than airtight, but when the train pulled in there were no police. Griffin, a trim, ruddy-faced man with cropped white hair, wearing a cream-colored summer suit and a blue dress shirt unbuttoned at the collar, descended from a second-class carriage carrying an old leatherette suitcase with two large folding straps; on his wrist was a bright gold-plated watch. A Welsh coal miner's son and a former rugby player, Griffin can be direct and pugnacious, but he is quick-witted and has a sardonic sense of humor. When I first reached him by e-mail, he replied, "I am Peter Griffin, star of stage, screen, and innuendo, and I may be able to contribute to your knowledge on this interesting subject."

"This is my version today," he said after we had settled down to lunch in an outdoor café.

Griffin told me that he knew very little about Gotthard Lerch, and he had "no inkling" of any nuclear deals with Iran, but he said that he had conducted business with A. Q. Khan on and off for two decades and worked with many of Khan's most important aides. The past year has been a particularly unhappy one for some of Khan's former collaborators; they have entered a twilight period of mutual suspicion and accusation in the aftermath of the failed Libya project. One European businessman, Henk Slebos, has been tried and convicted of export violations in the Netherlands; another group, in Switzerland, is awaiting trial. Some, like Lerch, have asserted their innocence, but others have chosen to turn state's evidence, or else have struck an ambiguous posture, offering limited coöperation to investigators, with a promise of more if the deal is right. There was always an element of tension among Khan's varied suppliers, Griffin said. Governments and the media, he told me, have misrepresented Khan's business associates by labelling them as a coherent-sounding "network," when in fact those who dealt with Khan rarely worked together, and were often competitors.

Griffin blames much of his own trouble on B. S. A. Tahir, a young Sri Lankan who enjoyed a "father and son" relationship with Khan, as Griffin put it. Tahir was imprisoned in Malaysia in 2004 because of his alleged involvement with the Libya project. Statements that he is reported to have made under interrogation appeared more than two years ago, after the Malaysian police issued a press release. Among other things, the release

"Really? That's the first time you've eaten somebody?"

named Griffin's company, Gulf Technical Industries, as a participant in the Libya conspiracy. After Tahir's claims were publicized, Griffin collected records from the Dubai government and other sources in an effort to prove that Tahir had forged documents and had hijacked his firm, using its name without Griffin's knowledge. Griffin told me that none of the Libya-related business transactions he participated in involved nuclear equipment or were otherwise illegal.

As we finished lunch, Griffin said that the investigations into A. Q. Khan's activities, as well as recent events, such as the invasion of Iraq, had changed his view of how governments work. "I used to think there was a grand plan, where the intelligence services of America, Britain, France, and Russia got together to say, 'Right, this is how it's going to be,'" he said. "Now I realize it's not that way at all. It's all knee-jerk reactions."

He threaded a tie around his neck as we walked to the *Landgericht*. We pushed through the door of courtroom No. 2 a few minutes before 2 P.M. The presiding judge, Michael Seidling, asked Griffin to wait in the building's cavernous lobby until it was time for him to testify. Spectators watching other cases in two adjoining courtrooms spilled into the lobby. One case involved a forced prostitution ring and the other concerned a double murder arising from a love triangle. "This is nothing, then," Griffin said of the Lerch trial. "This is only the Apocalypse."

Just after 4 P.M., Griffin took his place at a small table inside the courtroom. Lerch, at the defense table, to Griffin's left, squinted and stared down at his binder as Griffin talked about the history of his business dealings with Khan and Tahir. Once, in Dubai, Griffin said, more than a decade ago (he could not remember precisely when), he walked into Tahir's office on a social visit and found Lerch shouting, "I want my money!" He withdrew before he could determine what the dispute was about, he said. On a second occasion, in 2001, he said, Tahir asked him to transfer twenty-five thousand Swiss francs to Lerch's bank account, which he did without asking the purpose. (Tahir later paid him back.) Otherwise, Griffin said, he had no firsthand knowledge of Lerch's business dealings.

German criminal cases do not follow the adversarial structure of the Anglo-American tradition; they unfold more as commissions of inquiry, with the chief judge in control and witnesses called in no particular order. Griffin testified at a stage when the court appeared to be struggling to establish a basic sense of how the Libya project had been arrayed; his testimony hardly clarified the role that Lerch had played. Griffin spoke for two hours about contracts and shipping orders that preceded the seizure of the BBC China, but emphasized that Tahir, whose statements are central to the case against Lerch, should be considered unreliable. As the pertinence of Griffin's testimony emerged, Lerch smiled and scribbled notes to his lawyers suggesting additional questions.

For his part, Griffin seemed less concerned about Lerch's innocence than about his own. He used his time to describe the documents that he said exonerated his company, and he spoke in impassioned tones about how he had been victimized by Tahir and A. Q. Khan. At one point, Judge Seidling, seemingly befuddled by this complex story of accusation, asked Griffin whether he and Tahir were still friends.

"As far as I'm concerned—well, he may still like me," Griffin said. He paused for a moment, and then added quietly, "He betrayed me."

Abdul Qadeer Khan was born in Bhopal, India, in 1936. His father worked as a headmaster. After the partition of Britain's subcontinental empire, in 1947, into Hindu-majority India and Islamic Pakistan, Khan migrated to Pakistan; years later, he spoke bitterly about that journey, complaining that he had been harassed by Indian guards. He went abroad to become a scientist and studied in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, eventually earning a doctorate in metallurgy from the Catholic University of Leuven. While Khan was in Europe, Pakistan lost a war to India that shattered its Army and severed its territory, leading to the birth of the modern nation of Bangladesh; three years later, in 1974, India exploded its first nuclear device. "They were threatening us," Khan said years later, in an interview with the German journalist Egmont R. Koch. India "never accepted the establishment of Pakistan," he said.

Khan and his wife, a Dutch-South African, could be warm and generous to friends and colleagues, according to Griffin, but Khan could also be prideful and quick to comment on other people's shortcomings. Around the time of India's nuclear test, Khan took a job at a firm that worked with Urenco, a profit-making consortium that had been organized by the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. The group planned to build plants to enrich uranium for the civilian nuclear-power industry in Europe and elsewhere. Its engineers settled on a method using centrifuge machines, and engineering teams from each country began to work on designs.

Nuclear power plants and nuclear bombs rely on either uranium or plutonium, because they are fissile materials; that is, they can create the energy-releasing chain reaction called nuclear fission. Nuclear engineers often prefer to work with uranium, because it occurs naturally and is relatively easy to handle. To generate heat or explosive force with uranium, however, it is necessary to enhance its fissile characteristics. This involves raising the concentration of a particular isotope, U-235, a form of uranium whose atomic arrangements can generate a nuclear reaction. "Enrichment" refers to the complex and expensive chemical and industrial processes that increase the concentration of U-235 in a uranium compound.

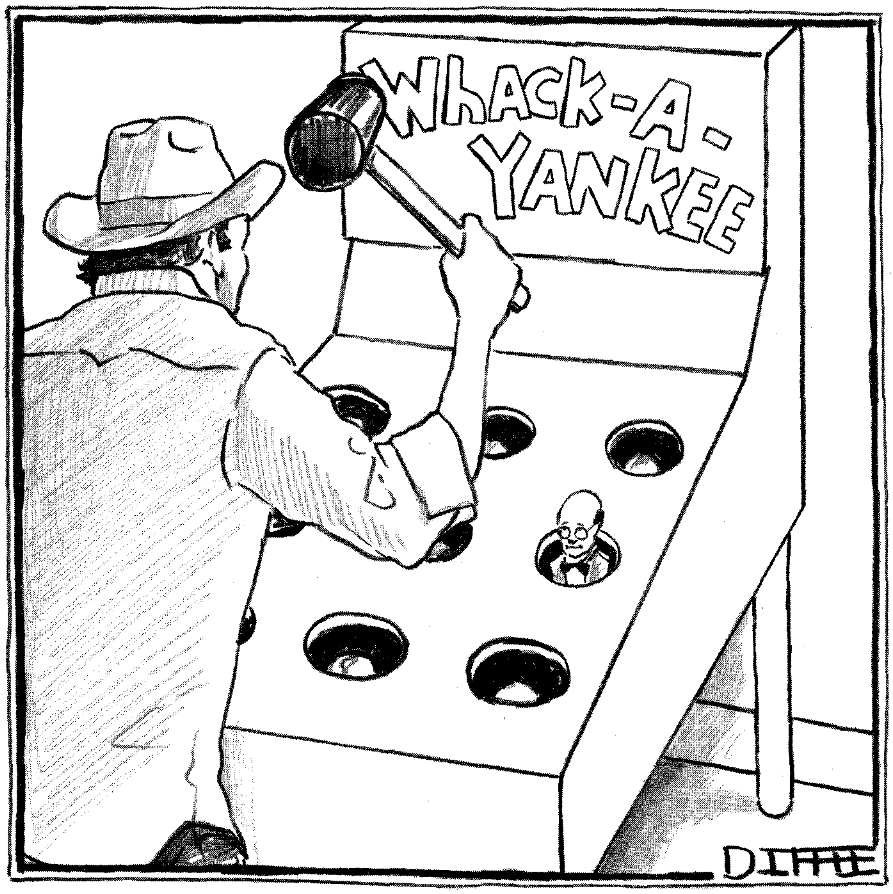
An early step in all these processes is to combine natural uranium with fluorine to produce a compound called uranium hexafluoride, or UF-6, which is relatively stable. Then, in a system based on centrifuges, the UF-6 is fed through pipes into whirling rotors. The design of a centrifuge can vary, but it is shaped like a thin, spinning cylinder, in some cases about eight inches in diameter and about five feet tall. It works on a principle similar to that underlying a spin dryer: as the chamber turns at extraordinarily high speeds—up to a thousand metres per second—the U-235 isotope separates. A single centrifuge can enrich uranium by only a small amount, however. In order to reach the levels of enrichment necessary for nuclear fuel (about five per cent U-235) or for nuclear weapons (about ninety per cent), the uranium compound must be poured continuously into additional centrifuges, which are connected as a cascade, much like the design of a water-filtration plant. Among the many sensitive parts of this system are the pipes, valves, and compressors that help guide the uranium into and out of the centrifuges; this supporting technology is referred to as a centrifuge plant's "feed-and-withdrawal system."

At Urenco, during the early nineteen-seventies, a Dutch engineering team came up with a centrifuge design sometimes called the SNOR, while the German team produced a rival design called the G-2. The latter system was more efficient, in the sense that it enriched uranium faster, but it was also more challenging to manufacture. A. Q. Khan worked as a consultant for the Dutch team, reviewing metallurgy problems. Security at Urenco was lax, and in 1975 Khan, determined to help his country match India's nuclear prowess, left his job and returned to Pakistan, allegedly carrying centrifuge blueprints with him. "He actually took both sets of drawings," another investigator in Europe said, referring to the SNOR and the G-2. "And the specifications, and the lists of suppliers." Khan was later tried in absentia in Holland on charges of nuclear theft.

By the next year, in Pakistan, Khan had been appointed the head of what became known as Khan Research Laboratories, and settled on the SNOR centrifuge design as the initial route to building a bomb. A single nuclear weapon requires about forty pounds of weapons-grade uranium; Khan decided that he needed to construct an industrial plant with thousands of centrifuges spinning at once, and, even then, it would take several years to produce enough material for a small nuclear arsenal. He chose Kahuta, a town southeast of Islamabad, as the site for his plant.

The narrator of a promotional sales video—which was produced by the laboratory, apparently to advertise its product lines to international customers—describes, over thumping music, how Khan saw this challenge: "In theory, it was simple but, practically, a gigantic task." The video, recovered two and a half years ago from Libya, celebrates Khan's achievements in illicit uranium enrichment as a kind of underground Third World legend, and its production values suggest a bootleg by a particularly dangerous punk band. The uranium-enrichment work that Khan undertook would be "a thrilling tale." The narrator explains, "The price for freedom was high, but freedom is surely not a commodity that can be judged by its price. And Pakistan had no other choice but to go nuclear."

By far the most difficult aspect of any nuclear-bomb-building project is the acquisition of fissile material. Learning how to shape the metal for a weapon, or how to set off a nuclear explosion, can be a challenge, but plans for crude devices have been in fairly wide circulation for half a century. There are a number of distinct technologies for creating fissile material, but centrifuges are particularly attractive



to countries that wish to keep their nuclear programs hidden, because the machines can be housed in ordinary buildings, and they do not give off indications, such as extensive electricity consumption, that can be detected easily.

Khan travelled back to Europe and found many willing middlemen and corporate venders. When Egmont Koch suggested to Khan that this period marked the start of his smuggling operations, his reaction was to describe how he relied on the freewheeling ethos of global commerce. "I mean, why do you paint a picture—smugglers, smuggling, and sneaking. . . . If you want to buy a thing, you place the order directly and you'll get it," Khan explained. "It is no problem. . . . You are not willing to sell it to me, but you are willing to sell it to Tom. So Tom buys from you, he takes ten per cent or fifteen per cent, and he sells it to me. This is purely a business deal!"

Beginning in the late seventies, the C.I.A. monitored Khan's dealings, and State Department diplomats often talked to European officials about particular sales. Sometimes the governments would stop an export and sometimes they would refuse. "For most countries, I think it was purely commercial—the money," said Richard Barlow, a former intelligence officer at the C.I.A. who tracked Pakistan's nuclear procurement during the nineteen-eighties, and whose warnings about Khan's progress were often ignored. West Germany and the Netherlands made a national priority of promoting manufactured exports, particularly when they involved precision engineering, and they viewed some of the American lobbying about exports to Pakistan as just another form of trade competition. "There would be endless meetings, export-control meetings," Barlow said. "We never really got that serious about it, the way we are now."

During this period, Gotthard Lerch worked as a division manager and as a salesman at the German engineering firm Leybold-Heraeus GmbH. The company had Urenco contracts for feed-and-withdrawal systems for the prospective enrichment plants. German prosecutors later charged that Lerch, who left Leybold in 1985, in order to form his own engineering company, had misappropriated blueprints; after a trial, in 1992, he was acquitted.

Khan often relied on old friends and university classmates as he constructed his supply network, and from the beginning there was a haphazard, almost accidental quality about his deals. Peter Griffin says that he became a supplier after an acquaintance of the scientist, searching for machine tools, dialled the wrong listing from a business directory. Griffin later met Khan over dinner "in a wonderful Pakistani restaurant within shouting distance of the House of Commons," as he recalled. He travelled to Pakistan and took orders for an array of Pakistani industrial and development projects—factories, water projects, conventional military programs, and farms, as well as nuclear projects. Khan's "aspirations and ambitions were tremendous," Griffin said. "I asked him, 'Do you ever want to be President?' He said, 'No way, I just want to help my country develop.' Very patriotic . . . He said, 'If it's good for Pakistan, I'd buy it from the Devil.'"

Khan spent large sums in this early period; his suppliers jostled for access to his largesse. The scientist's son-in-law, Griffin recalled, found a fortune-teller called the Professor upon whom Khan relied, put him on his payroll, and instructed the seer to advise Khan that if he did not give his son-in-law "a lot of business with high profit margins," as Griffin put it, Khan would "fall under a bus or something like this."

Iran's nuclear ambitions date back to the nineteen-seventies, when Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, announced a large-scale plan to develop nuclear power. After the 1979 Islamic revolution installed Ayatollah Khomeini as Iran's leader, many scientists left the country and the program fell dormant. During the mid-eighties, a group of Islamic clerics led by Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani preached that science could strengthen their revolution, and Iran revived its interest in uranium enrichment.

By now, A. Q. Khan's plant hummed with cascades of SNOR centrifuges. (Khan renamed the Urenco centrifuges the P-1 and the P-2, but, according to investigators in Europe, he made few alterations to the original designs.) "By 1981, our plant at Kahuta was fully operational," Khan says in his sales video. "On the 10th of December, 1984, I wrote a letter to the then President, General Zia ul-Haq, and informed him that we were now in a position to detonate a device—a nuclear device—on a week's notice."

Iran signed a secret nuclear-coöperation agreement with Pakistan the following year, according to Leonard Weiss, who tracked the issue at the time for Senator John Glenn and conducted investigations into Pakistan's program for a Senate subcommittee. Pakistan's motives were unclear; Zia, the country's mil-

"They've eliminated your grant to promote local agriculture."

itary leader, was a religious man, but not a revolutionary in Khomeini's vein. The 1985 agreement was detected at the time by American intelligence, but its provisions were unknown, Weiss said.

A one-page sheet, handwritten in neat letters, is the earliest known record of a business transaction between Iran and A. Q. Khan, or Khan's associates. The document dates to 1987, according to the I.A.E.A., and appears to be a shopping list prepared for Iran, created after a series of meetings in Europe. It refers, among other items, to materials for two thousand centrifuge machines. The handwriting has been checked against samples from Khan, Tahir, Lerch, and others, but no match has yet been found.

Gotthard Lerch is one of several German businessmen who had contact with Iran's nuclear program during these years, according to investigators, although whether he was at the European meetings is not known. An Iranian physicist who worked at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran and now lives in the United States told me that, when he travelled to Germany during the nineteen-eighties to purchase vacuum equipment for conventional military use, he met with Lerch, and that the German "tried to show me some movies" promoting sales of equipment that could be used for uranium enrichment. "Lerch was certainly meeting with the Iranians, but it's a little unclear what he did or did not sell to Iran," said David Albright, a former U.N. inspector in Iraq, who directs the Institute for Science and International Security, in Washington.

In 1987, Iran paid some of Khan's associates for what Iran's government has described as a relatively small package, mainly P-1 centrifuge blueprints. Iranian officials have explained that, like Pakistan, they wanted to build an indigenous nuclear industry. For this reason, they asked for drawings but not finished machines. There remains a great deal of uncertainty, however, about Iran's story. "That whole thing, that '87 transaction—there's a lot that A.Q. could shed light on," Robert Einhorn, who was the Assistant Secretary of State for Nonproliferation during the Clinton Administration, told me.

After this purchase, Iran claims, it had no further contact with Khan or his collaborators until 1993. In the meantime, Iranian officials took their blueprints and tried, mainly in Europe, to acquire the parts and machinery needed to make centrifuges. Iran's drive for nuclear independence "failed miserably," however, according to one of the investigators in Europe, and by 1994 they were negotiating again with the intermediaries in Dubai.

This time, Iran purchased components for five hundred used P-1 machines that were being taken out of service at Kahuta, where Khan was installing P-2 centrifuges. Iran's government paid millions of dollars for Pakistan's P-1 components—which it believed were new—and when it received them it possessed, apparently for the first time, the firm beginnings of its own industrial uranium-enrichment capability, which it kept secret. Iranian negotiators continued to talk with Tahir and other of Khan's aides, however; there were about ten additional meetings between 1996 and 1999, according to the account that Iran has provided.

The Iranians complained about the quality of the components they had received from Khan and demanded better customer service. There is more than a hint of rivalry between Iran's scientists and their suppliers from the Indian subcontinent. And yet by 1998 there was no mistaking who was ahead of whom: in May of that year, in reply to a series of nuclear tests by India, Pakistan exploded six nuclear bombs at a test site in its southwestern province of Baluchistan.

By now, Khan Research Laboratories had grown into a nuclear city-state brimming with contented employees, who had the advantages of the laboratory's own outstanding schools, hospitals, genetic-engineering labs, and even sports stadiums, "so much so that an excellent cricket stadium has been constructed, with arrangements that are of international standards," the narrator in the lab's sales video declares. With nuclear achievement came improved athletic prowess. "The performance of the K.R.L. cricket team is also on the verge of improvement," the narrator says.

On Rabie Street, in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa, a mining town about forty miles southwest of Johannesburg, several three-story metal buildings house a number of machine-tool workshops. Less than a mile away is Sharpeville, one of the largest, and poorest, townships in South Africa, and the site of a massacre on March 21, 1960, when white policemen shot and killed sixty-nine black protesters. Sharpeville and other townships nearby were erected by the country's apartheid government as crude encampments for black mine workers; they remain degraded places burdened by unemployment and crime.

One evening recently, when I drove to Vanderbijlpark, a filmy smoke from cooking fires in the townships clung to the horizon. The veldt in this region is dry and stony, speckled with waterberry and gardenia trees. Gold mining has stripped the hillsides of all but scrub, yet, with the price of precious metals surging, corporations are returning with advanced technology to sift gold dust.

Until 2004, about half a dozen South African engineers and machine-tool specialists worked on a program that one of the supervisors referred to as A.F. Project, which stood for "Arab Fuckers." The full scope of this work has yet to be unravelled. Mainly, A.F. Project appears to have involved the manufacture of nuclear-related systems for Libya, according to an indictment filed earlier this year by South African prosecutors, but documents discovered in the investigation also involve Iran, Pakistan, India, and South Africa's own apartheid-era nuclear programs.

I flew to Johannesburg in mid-June to interview Daniel Geiges, a sixty-eight-year-old Swiss engineer who has lived in South Africa since 1969. Although South Africa, as apartheid rule ended, gave up its nuclear-weapons program, the country still hosts a nuclear-power industry. South African prosecutors have indicted Geiges and Gerhard Wisser, the owner of a small consultancy where Geiges worked, called Krisch Engineering, for fraud and violations of South Africa's nuclear-control laws. Geiges and Wisser have been accused of filing false export forms and of improper shipments of sensitive equipment to and from Dubai, allegedly for the Libya nuclear project. The indictment also describes Gotthard Lerch as a participant in the conspiracy, although it does not charge him with a crime.

Daniel Geiges's trial has been postponed until next year; in the meantime, he received a diagnosis of colon cancer and has begun a regimen of chemotherapy. He has given an extensive statement to South African investigators, and his lawyer, Johan Hattingh, has attempted to negotiate a plea agreement—so far unsuccessfully. Geiges said that he had agreed to talk with me about his work on A.F. Project because he hoped that publicity about his willingness to coöperate might help speed a resolution of his case. He is virtually destitute, according to his lawyer, and because he has three school-age children he is anxious to settle his affairs.

Geiges is a slim, neat, brown-haired man with a dark goatee. I met him in Hattingh's offices in Pretoria, about thirty miles north of Johannesburg. He spoke precisely and tersely, in lightly accented English, and said that he first came to South Africa because, as a Swiss, "you live in a small country and you feel you have to go out, you have to get additional experience outside your country." He intended to stay for just a few years, but the longer he remained, he said, "the more I felt, whenever I went back to Switzerland, Germany, how narrow and narrow-minded things are. Here you've got a lot more—you've more elbow room."

He said that he first met Gotthard Lerch in the early nineteen-seventies, when Lerch was an executive at Leybold and Geiges had been hired as a subcontractor to manage a project for the Uranium Enrichment Corporation of South Africa. Lerch's company supplied some of the components that South Africa relied on.

Geiges said that in the mid- to late eighties he became aware that he was working for customers outside South Africa. His consultancy received an order for pipe work and autoclaves, which are used in the feed-and-withdrawal systems of centrifuge-based uranium-enrichment plants. "I was told, yes, that was for Pakistan," Geiges said. His boss, Gerhard Wisser, gave him the blueprints and, as Geiges recalled, said that they had come from Lerch. "I wasn't there myself," Geiges said, "but that is what Wisser told me—that he had received them from Lerch." Lerch, through his lawyer, declined a request for an interview; asked about Geiges's recollection, the lawyer said that he would not comment. (Wisser, through his attorney, also declined a request for an interview.)

AFTERWORDS

1.
Packs of wild dogs roamed the streets of the very rich,
looking for scraps that might have been thrown their way
by a caring cook or merciful maid. Birds flew in
from everywhere, going up and down and side to side.
In the distance, beyond the stucco mansions
with their patios and pools, beyond the cemetery
with its marble angels, barely visible to the naked eye,
a man was scaling a cliff, then stopped and turned, and
opened his mouth to scream, but when the screams arrived
they were faint and cold, no different from the snow
that kept on falling through the windless night.

2.
They rushed from their houses to welcome the spring,
then ran to the piers to gaze at the backs of fish,
long and glistening, then to the stables to see
the sleek, cloud-breathing horses. Nothing could keep them
from their joy, neither the storm gathering strength
in the west nor the bombs going off in the east;

That particular project took about a year to finish; later, there were other, smaller orders. At one point, Khan's aide B. S. A. Tahir and a scientist identified in the South African indictment as "Dr. Hashmi, a senior Pakistani nuclear expert," travelled to Johannesburg for discussions about Pakistan's nuclear-engineering requirements.

There is evidence that Khan's associates may also have used South Africa to make nuclear components for Iran during this period. Investigators have given Geiges a document from a South African transport company that appears to be a one-page price quotation dated October 2, 1991. The document is entitled "Shipment to Arak in Iran." Arak, the I.A.E.A. learned in 2003, is where Iran has begun construction on a nuclear reactor moderated by heavy water; the reactor's size and specifications are ideal for the production of plutonium. Geiges said that he doesn't know what deal, if any, the document describes. Investigators have been pressing him about it, he said, but "obviously I can't tell them things I don't know."

A.F. Project began when Wisser returned from a meeting in Dubai and asked Geiges to draw up a price estimate for a complete feed-and-withdrawal system for a plant that would be based on P-1 centrifuges. Geiges said he was told to use the blueprints that allegedly had provided a foundation for Pakistan's plant at Kahuta.

I asked Geiges whether he and Wisser had ever talked about the politics of nuclear weapons, or of their gradual spread. "There was not really very much reason to discuss that," he said. "Obviously, the mere fact that he brought this kind of project would indicate that he didn't necessarily share the views of the United States and its European allies in that regard.

"Look, for me it was in the first place a job which I'd been taught to do," Geiges continued. "I was three years away from retirement, and rocking the boat at that stage was simply not an option." He felt, he said, that he had "basically two options." He could "do it to my best ability, and within the given parameters, or I run to the authorities with a slim chance of making a fool of myself if it turns out that the whole thing could be legalized." If he became a whistle-blower, he thought, he would likely have to "lose a job and accept cuts in my retirement benefits—and become a pariah which no other employer would touch."

About two years after the manufacturing work began, two customers,

theirs was the bliss of another age. Suddenly,
a woman appeared on the beach and said that soon
she would sing. "Soon she will sing," murmured
the gathering crowd. "Soon she will sing," I said
to myself as I woke. Then I went to the window
and a river of old people with canes and flashlights
were inching their way down through the dark to the sea.

3.
Twenty crows sat on the limbs of an elm.
The air was so clear that one could see up
the broad valley of patchwork fields to the next town,
where a train releasing a ribbon of steam
pulled out of a small wood station. Minutes later,
a man stepped onto the platform, waited, then lifted
his suitcase over his head and hurled it onto the tracks.
"That's that," he said, and turned and walked away.
The crows had taken off, it was cold, and up ahead
long windblown shadows lashed the passive ground.

—*Mark Strand*

identified to Geiges only as Abdul and Ali, arrived for a visit.

"They seemed to know more than anybody else about the complicated system," Geiges recalled. "They said they were Ethiopians. I stupidly believed it, because I was not aware of the fact that Ethiopians are generally of much darker complexion. These guys—it was possible that they were Libyans, but I'm by no means certain."

Geiges said that he never reflected much on who the ultimate customer might be. "Obviously, the names indicated that they came out of a certain region," he said. He was aware, however, that the plant he was helping to build could produce uranium enriched to ninety per cent U-235—the level needed for bombs—because Lerch once told him so, he said.

Geiges studied centrifuge technology on the Internet, and he calculated—based on the Pakistani-derived blueprints that he was working with, as well as on test results from Pakistan's P-1 centrifuges he had been given—that the plant he was building could produce only four or five grams of highly enriched uranium per hour. That did not seem especially dangerous, no matter who the ultimate Middle Eastern client was, he said. "On the basis of five grams per hour, if you run the cascade for three hundred and sixty-five days, twenty-four hours a day, you'll end up with just under twenty-four kilograms of material."

"Right," I said. "One bomb."

"*Ja*," he agreed.

"Maybe all you need, depending on what you want," I said.

"*Ja*, but on that basis it would have taken about two hundred years to catch up with the Israelis."

The plant that Geiges worked on may have been for Libya, but the blueprints and the test results he received from Pakistan are the same ones that Iran has relied on, and the centrifuge-flow calculations that Geiges referred to are essential to any attempt to predict how fast Iran might be able to build a nuclear bomb. In Iran's case, there are several questions at issue: how many P-1 centrifuges it has been able to manufacture, how quickly its scientists will learn to operate their cascades, and how far it has progressed on the more advanced P-2 design.

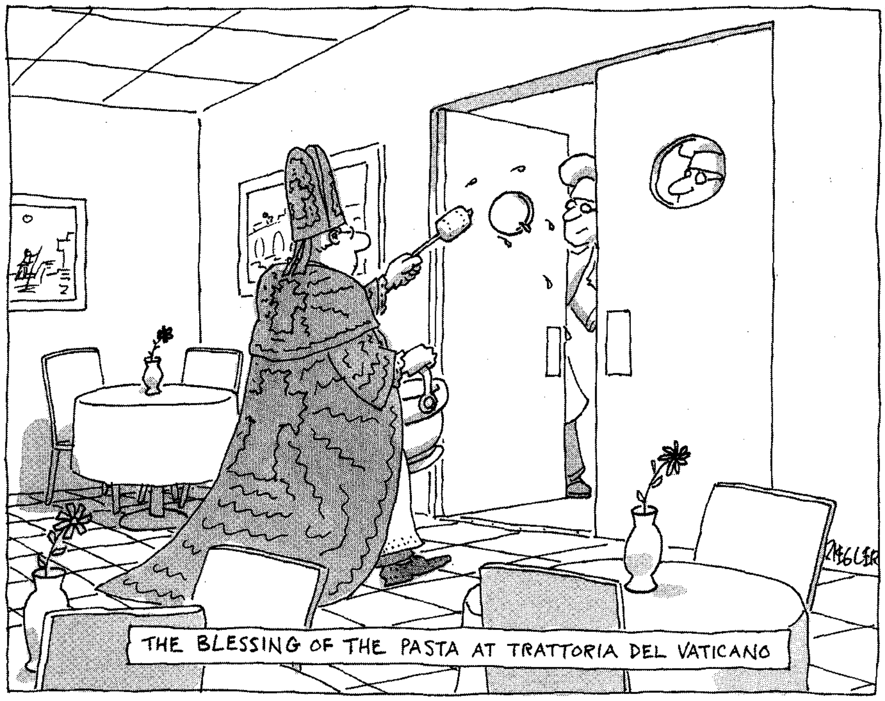
When American and European intelligence agencies assessed similar uncertainties about Iraq's nuclear program in the run-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, in 2003, they were inhibited by the fact that Saddam Hussein had banned U.N. inspectors from the country in 1998. Iran, on the other hand, has continued to permit I.A.E.A. inspectors to enter the country, and this has provided a much more detailed flow of current information about its nuclear program. Since the beginning of this year, however, the inspectors' work has been curtailed by the Iranian government.

A number of sites have attracted the I.A.E.A.'s interest since Iran's uranium-enrichment work was first revealed, but the inspectors have focussed particular attention on a cluster of buildings, arranged roughly in the shape of a star, near the mountain town of Natanz, about two hundred miles south of Tehran. From the outside, the facilities look like warehouses, but inside one of them inspectors have found what amounts to a building within a building—a large centrifuge hall that has been constructed to seal out dust and other impurities, and which Iran calls a "pilot" facility. Within this hall are six concrete blocks, each designed to support a cascade of a hundred and sixty-four centrifuges. On one of the blocks stands a finished cascade of P-1s in working order; several of the other blocks contain cascade components in varying stages of construction. In another part of the building are electrical and feed-and-withdrawal systems.

As part of an agreement that Iran made to suspend enrichment activities while it negotiated with Britain, France, and Germany, work inside this building was discontinued and Iran placed its lone centrifuge cascade under I.A.E.A. seals from 2004 until the beginning of this year. Those talks failed, however, and Iran has now resumed work at Natanz.

In public speeches, Iran's leaders have celebrated uranium-enrichment technology the way other countries celebrate sports championships or space launches. On April 11th, amid great fanfare, Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, announced that scientists at Natanz had for the first time enriched uranium to the levels required for nuclear fuel, although the amounts involved would have been very small.

About a hundred and fifty yards southeast of the pilot enrichment building at Natanz lies the entrance to an underground facility, reportedly situated beneath some twenty-five feet of earth and rock. Iranian officials have said that this underground plant, once it is com-



THE BLESSING OF THE PASTA AT TRATTORIA DEL VATICANO

pleted, could hold about fifty thousand centrifuges. Until this year, I.A.E.A. inspectors saw only empty concrete caverns. More recently, Iranian technicians have begun to move equipment into the underground facility. Iran has announced that it plans to install three thousand centrifuges by the end of this year; the government knows, of course, that the United States is aware of this underground facility, so it may conclude that placing all its equipment there would be unwise.

Iran's goal of three thousand working centrifuges by year's end seems very ambitious, according to David Albright, the former U.N. inspector. About a month is required to assemble a hundred P-1s. That rate might be increased by double shifts, but, even so, Albright estimates that Iran will likely be able to install cascades of only about fifteen hundred centrifuges by the end of 2007. If that number of cascades were to operate around the clock, based on the typical flow rates of the P-1, they would be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a single nuclear bomb after about a year.

It is easy to see why such specialists as Harvard's Graham Allison fear that American intelligence may be underestimating the speed with which Iran could build a weapon—for instance, even if Iran needed until the end of 2008 to build and continuously operate a cascade of fifteen hundred P-1s, it might still be able to enrich enough uranium for a single bomb before 2010. However, according to Albright and other analysts, there are a number of reasons to doubt that Iran will be able to move as fast as the theoretical P-1 flow rates might allow.

One issue is Iran's stockpile of components and spare parts. Albright estimates that Iran currently has about seven hundred rotor assemblies and materials for between a thousand and two thousand centrifuges, and possibly for as many as five thousand. Iranian negotiators have told the I.A.E.A. that they can make their own high-strength aluminum for P-1 rotors and their own autoclaves for the feed-and-withdrawal system. However, "they need spare parts, they need enrichment-related equipment—valves, piping," Albright said. He added that he is skeptical that Iran has developed an extensive ability to manufacture these items on its own. "I think they're buying," he said.

European companies that make sensitive nuclear parts are usually alert enough, these days, not to sell to Iranian agents directly, so Iran has turned to a new generation of intermediaries who are "a mixture of normal criminals," said Benedikt Welfens, a Potsdam prosecutor in charge of a widespread investigation into nuclear smuggling involving German companies. "They jack the price up fifty per cent, and then they sell it to Iran." Britain's Department of Trade and Industry recently posted a list of forty-five Iranian companies, universities, and government departments that it said had become subjects of concern "based on the last three years' experience" of attempted transactions involving materials that could be used to build missiles or weapons of mass destruction.

Even if Iran does assemble three thousand P-1s within the next year, it may have trouble running them. Centrifuge rotors spin so fast that the smallest imperfection—even a smudge or a fingerprint—can cause them to wobble and fail. A malfunctioning centrifuge rotor can be as destructive as a small tornado, breaking adjacent assemblies and piping. During an experiment in 2003, Iran reportedly watched up to one-third of its P-1 machines crash. "It's just tricky to run them all," Albright said. "That's why people think it will take time" for Iran to enrich enough uranium for its first nuclear bomb.

If Iran can master the P-2, it will be able to move much faster. According to a public briefing in April by the U.S. Under-Secretary of State, Robert Joseph, Iran has claimed that its version of the P-2 centrifuge can enrich uranium four times more quickly than the P-1. In that case, Iran could enrich enough material for four bombs each year if it were ever able to assemble and operate a plant of fifteen hundred P-2 centrifuges. In April, Ahmadinejad announced that Iran was embarking on a new round of P-2 research. There is great uncertainty, however, about the work it may already have undertaken in this field.

Iran has acknowledged receiving blueprints for the P-2 in 1995 from A. Q. Khan's business collaborators in Dubai. But Iran also said that it put these P-2 blueprints on a shelf and did no work on them until 2002, when it hired a contractor in Tehran to conduct experiments—work that ended in 2003. According to investigators in Europe, the Tehran contractor is a young man with little professional experience; he joined the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran because it offered a legal alternative to compulsory military service. For two years, according to the investigators, he worked on ball-bearing problems on the P-1, and when his government service ended he set up a consulting firm. He then approached Iran's nuclear authority about the dormant P-2 blueprints and received a small contract to conduct mechanical studies. He said that he built fewer than ten of these machines and ran only two of them, experimentally. He also acknowledged making inquiries to European firms about purchasing thousands of ring magnets, which are used to hold P-2 centrifuge cylinders in a vertical position as they spin. The contractor has said that he never actually placed a big order, but his description of his inquiries has struck some analysts as unconvincing.

Iran's sparse account of its P-2 work has fed suspicion among some Bush Administration officials that it may have a hidden, parallel uranium-enrichment program that is much farther along than the outside world understands. "There are big unanswered questions about the P-2 centrifuges," said Gregory Schulte, the Bush Administration's ambassador to international organizations, in Vienna, where the I.A.E.A. is headquartered. As for the possibility of a secret, parallel enrichment program, "It's something that we all need to worry about," Schulte added. "You always have to worry about 'What don't we know?'"

Some European investigators, though concerned about the gaps in Iran's account of its P-2 work, are nonetheless skeptical about the Bush Administration's emphasis on the possibility of a large-scale secret program. "I know that it's very, very strong in the minds of our U.S. colleagues," one of the investigators in Europe said. "I've got no evidence of that. And all I would say is that Iran is not such a large country. Many of the players know each other. . . . They're all part of the same associations; many of them have been at university together. I would have thought if there is a parallel program there would be some communication going on between the two programs. I don't see any evidence of that."

Some of the more hawkish officials in the Bush Administration argue that Iran will have passed a decisive point once it is able to continuously operate just a single cascade of a hundred and sixty-four centrifuges, because this would show its mastery of the crucial technology. According to this argument, if military action to disrupt Iran's nuclear program is to be considered, it should be considered soon.

As a narrow question of nuclear engineering, it may be correct that Iran is rapidly passing a point of no return, according to Marvin Peterson, a former Energy Department official who has studied Iran's program since the late nineteen-seventies. But Peterson strongly opposes military action against the Tehran government, and he doubts that Iran can be stopped. "It's too late," he said. Learning how to operate a P-1 centrifuge is "like a black art," he continued. "It's just a quality-control problem, making the thing very precise. . . . But, if the Pakistanis can do it, so can Iran."

"The Khan network is not something that should shock us," said Sam Nunn, the former U.S. senator from Georgia, who co-chairs the Nuclear Threat Initiative, an advocacy group that was established in 2001 with funding from Ted Turner. "It is our worst nightmare, but it has never been a nightmare in the sense of being unrealistic. When you see the kind of money involved, and the stakes involved, and the spread of this kind of technology around the world, it's virtually inevitable."

Even a radical regime like Iran's might be deterred from the use of nuclear weapons by the prospect of retaliation. However, Nunn continued, "once you start with a profit motive involved, then whether you start selling to private groups or Al Qaeda becomes a real open question. You can't deter people who don't mind dying, and don't mind their families dying, and think they will become martyrs."

Whether it is because this threat is in some mathematical sense improbable, or because its repetition as pulp-nightmare narrative on prime-time television shows like "24" has dulled the country's collective senses, the diffusion of nuclear-weapons technology through profit-making trade has attracted remarkably little outrage in America's political or media culture—certainly not as much, say, as the weaknesses in the nation's system for policing immigrant Hispanic gardeners. Nor has it spawned the sorts of protest about nuclear danger that roiled Europe during the Cold War.

Gotthard Lerch's smuggling trial in Mannheim did not attract much of an audience this summer. A few local freelancers turned up to feed a tidbit or two

"Held up at work? You could have called."

to the wire services, but none of the major German or international newspapers paid close attention. A plump, cheerful, white-haired pensioner enjoyed following the proceedings, and occasionally joined reporters in the lobby to chat about how the case was going. The atmosphere was strikingly informal. The prosecutor, Peter Lintz, is a young man who sometimes rode his bicycle to the courthouse. One of Lerch's attorneys, Gottfried Reims, is big and sloppy and prone to dramatic flights of speech; his younger co-counsel, Christof Püschel, has unruly brown hair, and he sometimes sat at the defense table with a laptop and a portable printer, typing out motions of protest. Lerch's lawyers argued that their client could not receive a fair trial. They said that key documents were missing, and they pointed to the intense, continuing interest of Western intelligence agencies in their client's activities. They claimed that intelligence and police investigations had become improperly intermingled.

The indictment in the case is surprisingly general, devoid of specific dates, but its thrust is that Lerch participated in a series of meetings to organize the Libya project, and, in particular, helped to organize some of the manufacturing in South Africa. The witnesses who might badly damage Lerch's defense—including Tahir, and Wisser and Geiges in South Africa—have not agreed to testify. At times, the German government seemed not to regard the case as much of a priority. During breaks in the trial, Reims and Püschel sometimes huddled in a corner of the courthouse lobby which was set aside for smokers; occasionally, amid clouds of cigarette smoke, they offered impromptu commentary on the case. One afternoon, I listened as Reims held forth on stories he had read in the press that quoted George Tenet, the former C.I.A. director, describing how C.I.A. officers penetrated Khan's network and even rummaged in his living room. "Let us presume that is true," Reims said, warming to his argument that intelligence investigations had compromised the chain of evidence against Lerch. "Then let Mr. Tenet tell us what he found out in his brave operations, in Khan's living room and at his company. What is the role of the C.I.A.? What is the role of the other secret services? All these people we hear about here, whose payroll are they on?" Gotthard Lerch, he concluded, sounding pleased with his flourish, was "like an Easter lamb that's been sacrificed."

"And this song goes out there to any girl who might consider sleeping with me."

On the last Wednesday in July, Reims arrived at the courthouse looking especially pleased, and said, "Today we will witness a big event." Inside the courtroom, it became apparent why he was so buoyant: from the bench, Judge Seidling announced that he had decided to suspend Lerch's trial. Among other reasons, he cited the difficulty of obtaining testimony from witnesses living abroad and the questions raised by the defense about missing documents. Seidling also said that Mannheim might not be the proper venue for the trial.

Afterward, Reims handed out a press release with the title "Atomic Trial Burst." Later that day, the court set bail for Lerch at five million euros. Reims immediately said that he would argue for a reduction, and the court is expected eventually to lower Lerch's bail to under a million euros. "If the justice system makes mistakes and can't conduct the case, then it must set him free," Reims said.

Investigators in Europe working on the Iran case said that the criminal prosecutions mounted against Lerch and other Khan collaborators have hindered them, because it is more difficult to interview witnesses, and defendants such as Lerch have decided not to coöperate. The Bush Administration has encouraged these criminal prosecutions, even though they can at times interfere with intelligence collection. "As a general rule, we have wanted to see these individuals prosecuted," Under-Secretary Joseph said in an interview. "For two reasons: first, so they pay for what they did, but, second of all, because of the deterrent value of that. This is a very lucrative business. . . . It was lubricated by lots and lots of money. That might be attractive to other individuals."

Indeed, Pakistan still requires imported nuclear equipment as it builds up its nuclear arsenal. Not only has Khan escaped prosecution; so have the dozen or more engineers and military officers who worked with him in international markets over the years, and there is little reason to believe that they have all given up their craft.

Apart from a scripted confession that he read on Pakistani television in 2004, A. Q. Khan has not revealed his own view of all this in years. There is every reason to think that he still regards himself as a Pakistani patriot as well as a force for peace. In past interviews, he has described Pakistan's nuclear weapons as a source of stability on the Indian subcontinent, because, he has argued, they will make a bloody conventional war between Pakistan and India much less likely. He has also discounted the possibility that radicals could seize power in Pakistan and thereby control its nuclear arsenal. "The fear is just imaginary," he said after Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests. "I don't think anything of the sort will happen in this country. People are quite wise, quite intelligent, yes."

During a break in the Lerch trial, I flew to France to visit Peter Griffin, the retired British businessman who had worked with Khan for two decades. He and his wife, Anna, a slender woman who has retired from a career in nursing, live in an eighteenth-century stone farmhouse amid vineyards and Roman-era villages; they own five acres beside a rail line near the town of Cognac. Some media accounts have suggested that Griffin lives in luxury, so when I arrived in his driveway he waved toward his compound and declared preëmptively, "It's not a castle. 'Modest' would be the way to describe it." Inside, there was a flat-screen TV and a bright, comfortable kitchen, but the swimming pool in the back yard was of the inflatable, aboveground variety; it came with the house, Anna said, but since it will please their grandchildren it remains. Upstairs is Peter's study and his library; there were several histories of the First World War, and a pair of books by Noam Chomsky, whose acid views on American foreign policy Griffin referred to approvingly several times as we talked.

Over two days, we spent much of our time going through the history and the details of Griffin's dealings with Khan, B. S. A. Tahir, and others, particularly the documents Griffin had collected in an effort to show that he and his company were innocent in the Libya project. He was clearheaded when he spoke about the complex details of his business affairs, but he would occasionally digress, often at my invitation, into sour monologues about the British and American governments. From time to time, our conversation drifted into questions of politics and global nuclear policy.

Particularly at the beginning, Griffin said, he believed that he was merely supporting Pakistan's industrial development and peaceful pursuit of nuclear energy—goals that he endorsed. He said that he first learned about Pakistan's nuclear-weapons program when he read allegations in the newspapers. Later, however, it became clearer where Khan might be headed. The scientist playfully signed for Griffin a copy of an investigative book about Pakistan's nuclear program, published in 1981, entitled "The Islamic Bomb," which was written, as Griffin put it, "by two gentlemen whose names wouldn't look out of place in the Tel Aviv phone directory."

Once, Griffin recounted, British customs investigators mounted an inspection of his company, and one of the officers declared that Griffin must surely know that he was helping Pakistan to acquire a bomb. "And I said, 'Well, so what?' I said, 'I believe that if everybody's got a big stick that's more security for the world than only a couple of people having big sticks.' "

Since the end of the Second World War, he continued, "There's been no nuclear threats. O.K., there's the Cuban missile crisis, which was push-and-go, but I don't think anything would have happened with it. I'm a bit more scared with the current philosophy on places like Iran. Because if your government decides they're going to take out Iran's facilities, it's going to open up an enormous can of worms, a Pandora's box."

In his conversation with the British customs investigators, Griffin went on, the officers "started introducing the moral attitude" about whether he really knew what he was doing. "Yes, I think that what I'm doing is what Pakistan should do, and what every nation has the right to do," Griffin recalls replying.

"Ah, but it's nuclear," the customs officer said.

"So what? You know, the thing in the sky that gives us warmth and heat every day is nuclear as well."

"But don't you think that this could implicate the security of Great Britain?" the customs officer asked.

"I don't think a rocket will go that far," he answered.

Perched on a couch in his living room, his brown-gray eyes shining, Griffin continued the story, and he explained his theory of global nuclear proliferation: "I said, 'What it is, in my opinion'—the view I held then, and I hold now—'is that the intention of the five, six, seven, eight, whoever got nuclear technology, they want to keep it for themselves, so they can become the Arabs of the future. When the oil runs out, they hold the resources for world energy, and they will then sell it to those countries, if they want to—if they don't want to, they won't sell it. So I think it is a dog-in-the-manger attitude to protect future income for the oil companies when oil runs out.' " In the meantime, he said, it behooved oil-producing countries like Iran to use their income to develop nuclear technology. "Every country will need to have access to nuclear technology, ultimately," he concluded. "Those are my views on it."

At one point, I suggested that he seemed to think that the spread of nuclear weapons would do little to make the world more dangerous. "No," Griffin answered confidently. "I think anybody—If they want nuclear weapons, they're going to have nuclear weapons." ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

LATE WORKS

Writers confronting the end.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Last words, recorded and treasured in the days when the deathbed was in the home, have fallen from fashion, perhaps because most people spend their final hours in the hospital, too drugged to make any sense. And only the night nurse hears them talk. Yet, at least for this aging reader, works written late in a writer's life retain a fascination. They exist, as do last words, where life edges into death, and perhaps have something uncanny to tell us. In 1995, the critic, teacher, and journalist Edward W. Said, best known for his pro-Palestinian advocacy, taught at Columbia a popular course called "Last Works/Late Style." Until his untimely death, of leukemia, in 2003, he was working on a collection of essays and lectures relevant to the topic; this assemblage, edited and introduced by Michael Wood with the coöperation of Said's widow, has now been published by Pantheon under the title "On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain" ($25). Said's central idea, set forth in the first chapter, comes from the German philosopher Theodor Adorno (1903-69), who wrote extensively, with an agitated profundity, on Beethoven's late works. Adorno found in the disharmonies and disjunctions of these works a refusal of bourgeois order, an "idea of surviving beyond what is acceptable and normal." In his own not easily understandable words, possibly clearer in the original German:

> Objective is the fractured landscape, subjective the light in which—alone—it glows into life. He [Beethoven] does not bring about their harmonious synthesis. As the power of dissociation, he tears them apart in time, in order perhaps, to preserve them for the eternal. In the history of art, late works are the catastrophes.

In Beethoven's case, the catastrophe was fruitful; Adorno credited his late style with presaging the innovations of Schoenberg, whose "advanced music has no recourse but to insist on its own ossification without concession to that would-be humanitarianism which it sees through." Adorno writes from within a sardonically modern, anti-bourgeois mind-set that welcomes dissociation, catastrophe, and affronts to harmony and humanitarianism. Thus art, at least modern art, makes itself new. Adorno decreed, "The power of subjectivity in the late works of art is the irascible gesture with which it takes leave of the works themselves."

The artists Said cites in "On Late Style" are predominantly composers and, in a chapter centered on Glenn Gould, performers. Said, an accomplished pianist and, among his other activities, music critic for *The Nation*, had an insatiable appetite for musical performances and, though he disclaims a musicologist's competence, an extensive and technical grasp of music. Beethoven, Mozart, Richard Strauss, Bach: among learned discussions of all these only a few writers are considered at any length, and they—the Sicilian aristocrat Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, the French criminal Jean Genet, the Greek Alexandrian poet Constantine Cavafy—are valued for their "against the grain" qualities of eccentricity and intransigence. A different list of literary performers would be needed for an inventory of late works that answer, perhaps, to what another literature professor, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, has termed the "senile sublime." Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in her book "Touching Feeling" (2003), uses the phrase to describe

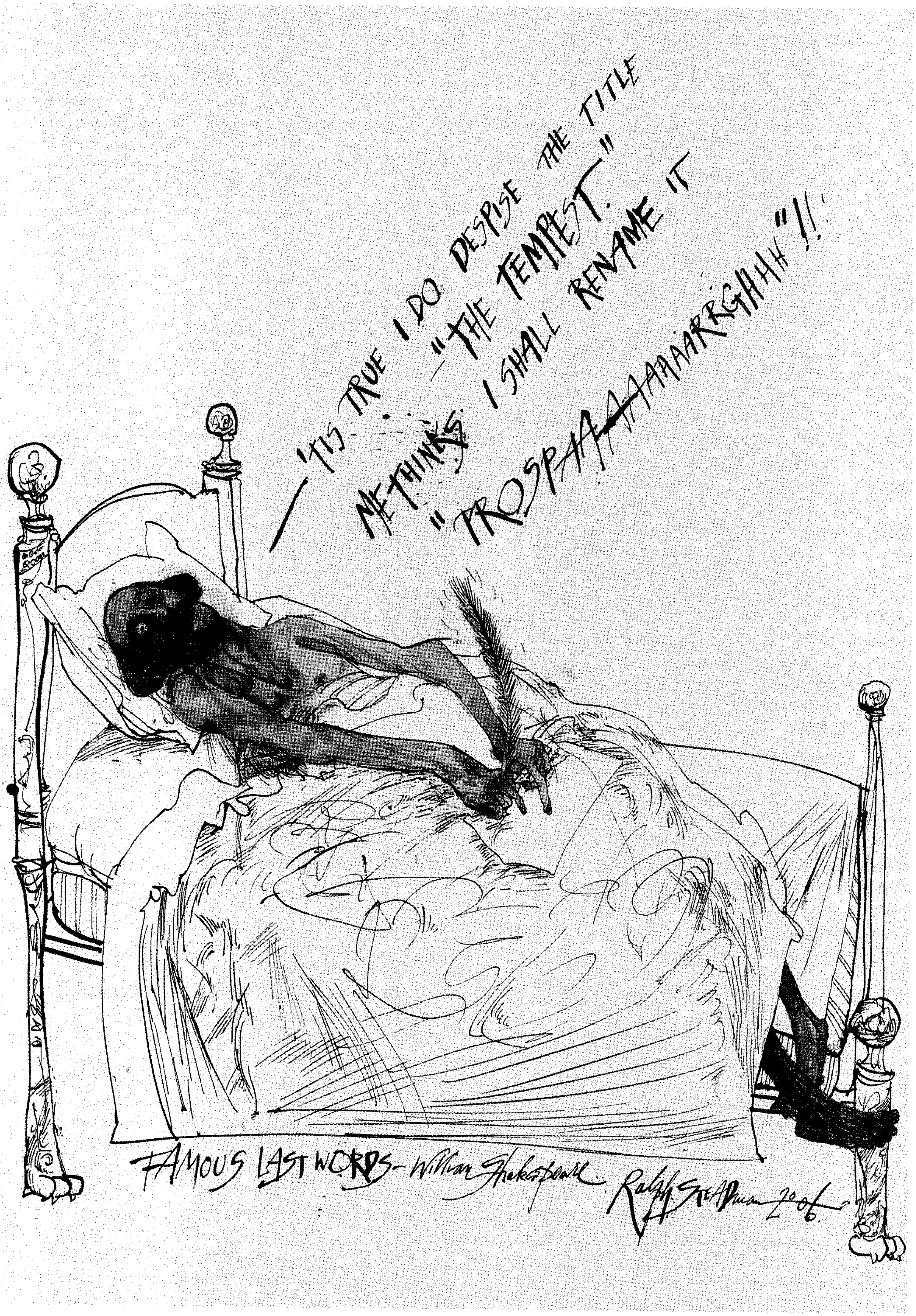
> various more or less intelligible performances by old brilliant people, whether artists, scientists, or intellectuals, where the bare outlines of a creative idiom seem finally to emerge from what had been the obscuring puppy fat of personableness, timeliness, or sometimes even of coherent sense.

A sacrifice of, or impatience with, "coherent sense," as well as the requisite irascibility and what Said calls "highlighting and dramatizing . . . irreconcilabilities," can certainly be ascribed to the shimmering late works of Shakespeare, an artistic titan on Beethoven's scale. Lateness came early to both, both dead in their fifties.

After the composition of Shakespeare's last tragedies—the opulent, spacious "Antony and Cleopatra" (1606-1607), the cold, rhetorically contorted "Coriolanus" (1607-08), and the rough-hewn, one-note "Timon of Athens" (1607-08)—there is a slackening, as if something had snapped. "Timon of Athens," apparently unfinished and unproduced, has been thought by some speculative scholars to mark a personal crisis for the writer; no less measured a source than the Encyclopædia Britannica perceived "a clear gulf" between it and the four plays that follow. These plays—"Pericles" (1607-08), "Cymbeline" (1609-1610), "The Winter's Tale" (1610-11), and "The Tempest" (1611)—are commonly grouped together and called romances. Their form is a crowd-pleasing one, still in wide use: the audience, after witnessing many travails and perils, arrives at a happy, if implausible, ending—storms, terrors, and confusions give way to recognitions, reunions, forgiveness, and reconciliation. But a silvery chill blows through these romances, a deliberate and, at times, brazen use of stage artifice.

Changes had overtaken Shakespeare's physical theatre. After a decade of performing at the Globe—a London amphitheatre patterned on the inn courtyards where plays used to be staged, with little more scenery than what language could paint on air—Shakespeare's company succeeded in taking over the Blackfriars theatre and, in 1609, began winter performances there, out of the weather, with more elaborate effects. Spectacle—which Aristotle's "Poetics" ranked, with Song, as the least of tragedy's necessary parts, behind Plot, Character, Diction, and Thought—grew in importance under James I. The Stuart court was more open to Continental divertissements than Eliz-

RALPH STEADMAN


'TIS TRUE I DO DESPISE THE TITLE "THE TEMPEST."
METHINKS I SHALL RENAME IT
"PROSPAAAAAAAARRGHHH"!!

FAMOUS LAST WORDS - William Shakespeare.

Ralph Steadman 2006.

abeth's had been; masques, performed by masked dancers who invited the audience to join in, enlisted such high talents as Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones.

Shakespeare's dramas became parades of wonders. "Pericles" brings the medieval poet John Gower onto the stage to shepherd, in quaint tetrameters, its mythological hero back and forth across the Mediterranean. "Cymbeline," whose plot was memorably characterized by Dr. Johnson as "unresisting imbecility" marked by "the impossibility of the events in any system of life," caps its absurdities with the rhyming apparition of the hero's dead parents and brothers, and the descent of Jupiter "in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle." "The Winter's Tale" subjects its protagonist, King Leontes of Sicilia, to an insane fit of jealousy at the beginning, and at the end has a statue of his wife, for sixteen years thought dead, dramatically come to life. Shakespeare, who was, after the early death of his son, Hamnet, the father of two daughters, inflicts upon his young romantic heroines, with their pretty names Marina, Perdita, and Innogen, no ordeal that they do not come shining through. As Stephen Orgel observes in his introduction to the Pelican "Pericles," "Death is acknowledged to be real" in a late tragedy like "Antony and Cleopatra" but is "denied in *Pericles*, as it is, though to a lesser extent, in *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*."

Yet the last of these, "The Tempest," is one of Shakespeare's masterpieces: the strained contrivances and righted wrongs of the previous romances—"Plot has always been the curse of serious drama," George Bernard Shaw said, discussing "Cymbeline"—fall simply into place, with the contriver in plain view, his motives and magical means established at the start. Prospero, the unjustly deposed Duke of Milan and self-taught sorcerer, spins the plot before our eyes, beginning with the tempest that lands the cast of characters on his private island. The hero and the contriver merge into an omnipotent artificer. In the fourth act, having provided a suitor for his cloistered daughter, Miranda, he stages a masque, starring Iris, Juno, and Ceres, for Miranda and her swain, Prince Ferdinand. When an unpleasantness left over from earthy reality, the rebellion of his slave Caliban, disturbs the performers, so that "to a strange, hollow, and confused noise, they heavily vanish," Prospero reassures his audience of two:

> These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous
> palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind.

Tradition regards this stately valediction, this folding up of the sorcerer's equipment, as not only Prospero's but Shakespeare's. The pun on "globe" is cemented in the First Folio printing, which capitalizes the noun. In Prospero's self-descriptions, the word "art" reverberates. The romancer is a necromancer: "Graves at my command / Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth / By my so potent art." His command is absolute; even sluggish, recalcitrant Caliban, the surly colonized lone native of the island, grumbles, "I must obey. His art is of such pow'r." Prospero reminds Ariel, "It was mine art . . . that made gape the pine and let thee out." Ariel is beckoned by "Come with a thought!" and materializes saying, "Thy thoughts I cleave to." Only a writer with his quill poised over blank paper has thoughts leap into such instant effectuation. Prospero promises, "Deeper than did ever plummet sound, / I'll drown my book."

Why would Shakespeare say his farewell in a play written before he was fifty? He did not, we must make an effort to remember, have posterity's view of himself. The hectic rough-and-tumble of the Elizabethan theatre, like the television-script mills of today, did not promise high status or literary immortality. He arrived in London in the fifteen-eighties, it is thought, and found employment as an actor; within a few years, the player branched out to become a playwright. By 1592, he was already successful enough to attract bitter words from the rival dramatist Robert Greene, who famously wrote, in "Greenes Groatsworth of Witte":

> There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you . . . in his owne conceit the only Shakes-scene in a countrey.

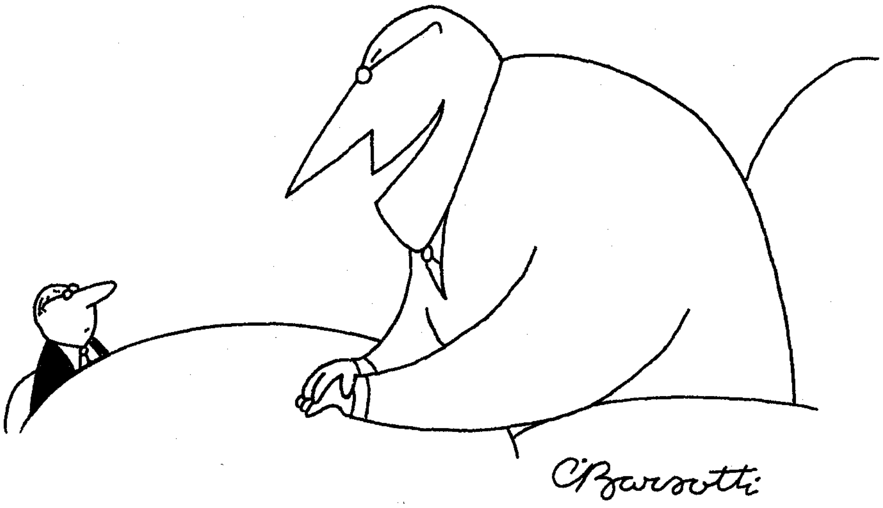
In the next two decades, Shakespeare wrote nearly two plays every year, besides composing the two long and popular narrative poems "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," which were evidently the only publications of his that he ever troubled to proofread. His sonnets were pirated and printed in a jumbled fashion. His duties as playwright and player are deplored as "public means" in Sonnet 111, a lament at Fortune, the "guilty goddess" who did not "better for my life provide / Than public means which public manners breeds" so that "my nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

Dirty work, in other words, though lucrative. For some time, he had been making preparations for a gentleman's retirement from London to his native Stratford, completing his father's application for a coat of arms in 1596 and, the following year, acquiring New Place, one of the largest houses in the town. "The Tempest" ends with Prospero claiming his right to "retire me to my Milan, where / Every third thought shall be my grave." To the playwright's first biographer, Nicholas Rowe, nearly a century later, early retirement seemed natural enough:

> The latter part of his life was spent, as all Men of good Sense will wish theirs may be, in Ease, Retirement, and the Conversation of his Friends. He had the good Fortune to gather an Estate equal to his Occasion and, in that, to his Wish.

True, he was not quite done with London. In 1612, identified as "of Stratford-upon-Avon," he testified in a civil case involving some former London landlords of his. In 1613, he bought his first London real estate, the gatehouse of the former Blackfriars monastery, near the theatre. Yet evidence suggests that he did not get much use out of this pied-à-terre; in 1616, a tenant occupied it. Presumably, Shakespeare returned to collaborate with John Fletcher on three known plays: the lost "Cardenio," based upon a story in "Don Quixote" and performed twice at court; "All Is True," or "Henry VIII," a patriotic pageant centering on Cardinal Wolsey's fall and the future Queen Elizabeth's birth; and "The Two Noble Kinsmen," another surreal romance. "Henry VIII" involved a masque in which cannons were fired, and on June 29, 1613, a stray piece of ignited wadding landed on the Globe's thatch and burned down the theatre. It was rebuilt within the year, but Shakespeare was no longer a part owner; there is no mention in his will of his theatre shares.

The end of "the great Globe" seems to have ended Shakespeare's connection with the stage, three years short of his death. The causes of his death have been much speculated upon; syphilis and alcoholism are mentioned. The vicar of Stratford, around 1662, recorded in his diary that "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Jonson, had a merie meeting, and itt seems drank too hard." Park Honan's biography argues for a case of springtime typhoid fever caught from the fetid stream that ran past New Place into the Avon. Our impression remains that "The Tempest" foretells Shakespeare's end: it is a lovingly composed late work, the roughness of its predecessor romances smoothed, their dissonances resolved in—as Said says in connection with the final compositions of Richard Strauss—a "recapitulatory and even backward-looking and abstracted quality."



"I hope you don't think that you have a monopoly on ethics."

• •

Nathaniel Hawthorne's terminal illness came to pass in the clear light of nineteenth-century graphomania, but the two hundred and fifty years of advances in medical science since Shakespeare's death leave the American romancer's diagnosis similarly vague. In early 1864, Hawthorne's wife, Sophia, wrote in alarm to his old friend Horatio Bridge:

> I have felt the wildest anxiety about him because he is a person who has been immaculately well all his life, and this illness has seemed to me an awful dream which could not be true. But he has wasted away very much and the suns in his eyes are collapsed, and he has no spirits, no appetite, and very little sleep.

Hawthorne had returned with his family to America in 1860, after seven years abroad—four as U.S. consul in Liverpool and three more as a sojourner in Italy and England—in outward good health, though within a year Sophia was confiding to his publisher, William Ticknor, of Ticknor & Fields, that her husband was "low in tone and spirits. . . . He has lost the zest for life."

Settled in a spacious Concord house, the Wayside, with renovations that included a third-floor "tower room" to serve as a study, Hawthorne began to write the successor to "The Marble Faun" (1860), which had been, despite mixed reviews, a considerable commercial success. He began by picking up a tale, "The Ancestral Footprint," that he had begun and abandoned in 1858; it was based upon an anecdote he had heard at an English dinner party, of an indelible bloody footprint left on a flagstone at the bottom of a staircase in a Lancashire mansion. He attempted to merge this ominous detail with a vision of an American trying to claim an English inheritance; as James R. Mellow puts it in his biography of the writer, "They were, in fact, one theme—and a recurrent one in Hawthorne's fiction. A lost estate and an ancient crime—Eden and the Fall." Hawthornian though the materials were, he could not make the story go. He wrote in his journal:

> There seem to be things that I can almost get hold of, and think about; but when I am just on the point of seizing them, they start away, like slippery things.

He changed the title from "The Ancestral Footprint" to "Etherege" and then to "Grimshawe"; he shifted the action to a gloomy burial ground in Salem; he filled his margins with, as Edwin Haviland Miller puts it in another biography, "corrections, interpolations, exclamations of frustration, and unanswerable questions as to plot, characterization, and motivation." Always a stern self-critic, Hawthorne scribbled such cries of despair as "All this amounts to just nothing. I don't advance a step," and "I have not the least notion how to get on. . . . I never was in such a sad predicament before." Prompted by a story Thoreau told him, of a previous resident of the Wayside who had determined to live forever, he took up the theme of a magic elixir, which had already figured in his short story "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." He placed his new romance in Concord, took as his hero a half-Indian seminary student undergoing a crisis of faith, and named him Septimius Felton, then Septimius Norton. Septimius, in an encounter that has strong homoerotic and narcissistic overtones, kills a British soldier and finds on his body the formula for eternal life. Hawthorne, wearily climbing the steep stairs to his tower room day after day, accumulated two manuscripts, amounting to almost five hundred pages in the Centenary Edition of his works, and supplied three different endings for his hero—death by hanging, escape to the sea, and a successful career in the Continental Army—but finally gave up.

By 1863, the novelist presented a weakened appearance. "He looks gray and grand, with something very pathetic about him," Longfellow recorded in his journal. The Civil War was taking a toll; Hawthorne had always distrusted philanthropists, enthusiasts, and great causes, and his continued loyalty to his old Bowdoin classmate Franklin Pierce, the antebellum President actively expressing anti-Lincoln views to New Hampshire audiences, put him at odds with his abolitionist neighbors and in-laws—Emerson and Sophia's sister Elizabeth Peabody being especially militant. His block in regard to fiction did not keep him, however, from reshaping his English journals into articles for *The Atlantic Monthly;* they were collected in 1863 into a book of British impressions, "Our Old Home." Though dismissed by Hawthorne himself as "not a good nor a weighty book," and freighted with a stubbornly, gallantly retained dedication to the unpopular Pierce, "Our Old Home" sold well enough to whet Ticknor & Fields's appetite for more Hawthorne.

In December, he showed Fields the first chapter of his final reworking of the elixir theme, now titled "The Dolliver Romance." In it, his imagination was back on the edge of the burial ground, and had conjured up a likable protagonist, a very elderly guardian of a three-year-old great-granddaughter. Dr. Dolliver needs to live on for her benefit, not from any selfishness of his own; he wears—emblematic adornments characteristic of Hawthorne—an ancient dressing grown of many patches and, to shelter his tiny ward from the unnatural, elixir-fed gleam in his eyes, green spectacles. Fields pronounced the chapter "very fine" and, on the cover of the January, 1864, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, advertised Hawthorne's forthcoming serialized novel. On February 25th, the author wrote Fields a long and rather manic, self-mocking letter about "the abortive Romance," stating:

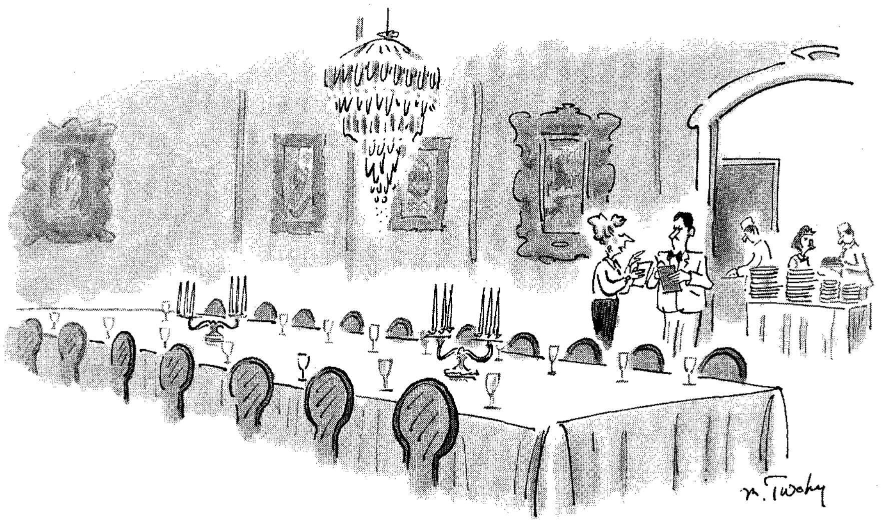
> I shall never finish it. . . . I cannot finish it unless a great change comes over me; and if I make too great an effort to do so, it will be my death; not that I should care much for that, if I could fight the battle through and win it, thus ending a life of much smoulder and scanty fire in a blaze of glory.

The smouldering ceased twelve weeks later, when the author died in his sleep, not quite sixty years of age, on a trip north into New Hampshire with Pierce, who had hoped to revive his loyal old friend's body and spirits with a change of air.

Like one of his blighted, poisoned, or irremediably stained characters, Hawthorne wasted away, while personal demons balked his creative powers. Sophia, rarely at a loss for a phrase, wrote, "It seems to me that more and more delicate melodies are struck out from his mind at every revolution of the earth-ball, so that it gets to be a swan-song almost." As he stated in the preface to his first novel, "The Scarlet Letter" (1850), he had early determined to build his fiction on the "territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other." This moonlit in-between ground supported many provocative and poetic short stories but really only one novel, the first; the rest, though rarely less than beautifully written, and shot through with shrewd rays of observation, are webs full of gaps that the author was unable or disinclined to fill in. His journals show a sharp-eyed, amused realist, but his imagination, which ripened in the unnatural solitude of his young manhood in Salem, set itself feats of balance on the edge of the unreal that, as the real shadows closed in, he was unable to sustain.

Longfellow, in his memorial poem "Hawthorne," wrote of his friend's "wand of magic power," as if he had been Prospero; but the summoned spirits in the end did not come. Shakespeare in his late romances had the coarse "public means" of stagecraft to solidify his death-denying fictions; Hawthorne, solitary in his Concord tower, had only secluded intuitions, and these darkened and dissolved. The writer depended upon a touch of spookiness, but the man did not believe in spooks. Death was real. As he put aside his second extended attempt to carry "The Ancestral Footprint" to completion, Hawthorne wrote of his protagonist:

> Some strange, vast, sombre, mysterious truth, which he seemed to have searched for long, appeared to be on the point of being revealed to him; a sense of something to come; something to happen that had been waiting long, long to happen; an opening of doors, a drawing away of veils, a lifting of heavy, magnificent curtains, whose dark folds hung before a spectacle of awe;—it was like the verge of the grave.



"We'll alternate the windbags with the hard-of-hearing."

Herman Melville's "Billy Budd," also published posthumously, in a state of suspended revision, has fared better with posterity than Hawthorne's unfinished romances. This tale, less than novella-length, is the most studied and admired of Melville's works except for "Moby-Dick"—a globally ambitious novel greatly enriched by Melville's acquaintance with Hawthorne and his elated discovery of the older writer's dark, symbol-laden short stories. Melville near the outset of "Billy Budd" invokes Hawthorne's name but in the next paragraph assures the reader that his story is "no romance." Far from evading death, he steers his narrative straight toward the hero's hanging. His frequent allusions to classical and Biblical myth, his learned excursions into British naval history decorate but do not divert the tale; like Faulkner at his most surging, he seems confident that the underlying story is simple and predetermined enough to survive any digression.

The setting is Melville's métier, shipboard, solid and rolling underfoot. There are three essential characters, each with a tragic flaw: gloriously handsome Billy, with his stutter; staunch and sterling Captain Edward Vere, with "a queer streak of the pedantic running through him"; and master-at-arms John Claggart, with an unhealthily sallow complexion and a depraved antipathy to the sunny "moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd." As in Hawthorne, there are themes of surrogate paternity and "natural" aristocracy and "elemental evil," but Melville's arise within a firmly circumstantial setting—a sailing warship recalled in avid detail from within an age of steam—and a specific historical moment, the year 1797, when the ideas of the French Revolution had sparked the Great Mutiny and a harsh renewal of discipline within the British Navy. At one point in his revisions, Melville deleted the paragraphs explaining this historical context; indeed, his stark story, told in many short segments, feels whittled down, as opposed to Hawthorne's desperately shifting accretion of "slippery things."

Melville's sentences, a little arthritic and desiccated decades after the headlong prose of his prime, and marked, the manuscript (at Harvard) reveals, by many hesitations and revisions, may sometimes grope, but his plot, the Christlike martyrdom of his "fated boy," moves unflinchingly. Such a fated directness, driven by the yarning, reminiscing authorial voice, can be felt in other late works, such as Tolstoy's "Hadji Murad," which, too, was published posthumously. "My vigor sensibly declines," Melville wrote in late 1889 to a Canadian admirer. "What little of it is left I husband for certain matters yet incomplete, and which, indeed, may never be completed." Melville was seventy at the time, and "Billy Budd" was almost certainly one of the matters; he had retired from the U.S. customs service in New York at the age of sixty-eight, and was seventy-two when he died. Not long before, Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne's son, had visited Melville in his near-total obscurity, and found, in Julian's words, a "melancholy and pale wraith," fidgety and nervous, whose "words were vague and indeterminate." Yet this same man, initially undertaking to write a headnote to one of his poems—poetry had been, after the failure of three successive novels, his only literary exercise for more than thirty years—found vigor enough to crowd onto a naval incident from 1797 most of what he felt about male beauty, human justice, cosmic injustice, and the Christ myth.

Death, one would think, naturally haunts late works; yet perhaps it does not. A negation defies objectification; disappearance has no appearance. Adorno wrote, "Death is imposed on created beings, not on works of art, and thus it has appeared in art only in a refracted mode, as allegory." What does haunt late works is the author's previous works: he is burdensomely conscious that he has been cast, unlike his ingénue self, as an author who writes in a certain way, with the inexorable consistency of his own handwriting. "I am tired of my own thoughts and fancies and my own mode of expressing them," Hawthorne wrote not many months before he died. Turning this way and that in his last creative torment, he kept meeting, with a shudder, his pet modes of imagining, chimeras on the fault line between the imaginary and the actual. Melville, no stranger to self-centered overcomplication, in old age found his way back to an earnest simplicity. Successful late works, shed of "obscuring puppy fat," tend to have a translucent thinness.

In the twentieth century, James Joyce, asked what he planned to write after the seventeen years' labor of "Finnegans Wake," responded, "I think I'll write something very simple and very short." His actual last work, carried forward in the French village of Saint-Gérand-le-Puy with the help of Paul Léon, was the list of more than a thousand misprints in "Finnegans Wake"—a significant task, given the unique letter-by-letter difficulty of the text and Joyce's near-blindness. A few weeks after escaping from Vichy France, he died in Zurich, early in 1941, following an operation for a perforated duodenal ulcer, at the age of fifty-eight. His last great work, whose punning title has Finnegan waking at his wake, could be said to deny the reality of an individual's death, lost as it is amid the great cycles of history and the tireless babble of humanity:

> Onetwo moremens more. So. Avelaval. My leaves have drifted from me. All. But one clings still. I'll bear it on me. To remind me of. Lff! So soft this morning, ours. Yes.

Few authors get to produce works as late in life as another expatriate Irishman, George Bernard Shaw. His last book brought together, with prefaces, the four-act play "Buoyant Billions," six playlets titled "Farfetched Fables," and the puppet play, mostly in blank verse, called "Shakes Versus Shav"; they were written when the author was, respectively, ninety-two, ninety-three, and ninety-four years old. We approach work by such an ancient with uneasiness, but the opening preface reassures us that we are secure in the hands of a masterly comedian, an irrepressible truthteller, his faculties intact:

> At such an age I should apologize for perpetrating another play or presuming to pontificate in any fashion. I can hardly walk through my garden without a tumble or two; and it seems out of all reason to believe that a man who cannot do a simple thing like that can practice the craft of Shakespear. . . . Well, I grant all this; yet I cannot hold my tongue nor my pen. As long as I live I must write.

Writing, he cheerfully informs us, is no work at all. It is simply a matter of taking dictation: "When I take my pen or sit down to my typewriter, I am as much a medium as Browning's Mr. Sludge or Dunglas Home, or as Job or John of Patmos. When I write a play I do not foresee nor intend a page of it from one end to the other: the play writes itself."

The claim is perhaps cagily ingenuous, by a writer often accused of being too cerebral and cool-hearted. With Shaw, whose fame didn't set in until his forties and whose "Saint Joan," which in effect won him the Nobel Prize, was written in his sixty-eighth year, we have late works that display little loss of muscle, because his muscles were always concentrated in his head—his mischievous quick eyes, his agile tongue. He and Goethe and Victor Hugo show Americans what they have few native examples to learn from: writing can be a healthy, life-giving activity, sustainable—in Shaw's case with the help of teetotalism, vegetarianism, and bicycling—through a generous mortal span. His imminent death had no terrors for him—rather, the reverse. In the brief but pithy preface to "Buoyant Billions," Shaw writes of spiritualists, "They believe in personal immortality as far as any mortal can believe in an unimaginable horror." No such horror need apply for belief to this buoyant spirit. His "Farfetched Fables" grapple blithely with the atomic bomb and its threat of global annihilation, and his antic puppet play quotes Prospero's "great Globe itself" speech and caps it with the saucy lines

Immortal William dead and turned to clay
May stop a hole to keep the wind away.

Graham Greene, blessed with a longer life than his suicidal impulses, his hazardous travels, and his pessimistic novels would have presaged, saw his books shrink in size, from the respectable bulk of the best-selling "The Honorary Consul" (1973) and "The Human Factor" (1978) to such quirky bagatelles as "Doctor Fischer of Geneva; or, The Bomb Party" (1980), "Monsignor Quixote" (1982), "J'Accuse—The Dark Side of Nice" (1982), "Getting to Know the General" (1984), and "The Captain and the Enemy" (1988). Greene's last book, edited and introduced by him but ushered into publication by Yvonne Cloetta, his mistress, in obedience to his deathbed request, is "A World of My Own: A Dream Diary" (1992), a selection of the dreams he habitually recorded in the last twenty-five years of his life. The dreams of this somewhat sinister writer show his subconscious to have been, on the whole, a salubrious and well-illumined site, full of books, public personalities, and cheerful candor. The last dream finds Greene writing a verse on his own death "for a competition in a magazine called *Time and Tide* ("My breath is folded up / like sheets in lavender. / The end for me / Arrives like nursery tea"), and the first reverts to an Edwardian childhood as he sees a train that "consisted of pretty carriages" and boards the next one:

> I was much struck by the kindness and jollity of the passengers, who welcomed me and made room for me in a very packed carriage. They all wore strange clothes—Edwardian or Victorian—and I was fascinated by the stations we passed. On one wide platform children were playing with scarlet balloons; another station was built like a ruined Greek temple; at one point the track narrowed and the train went through a kind of tunnel made with mattresses.
>
> I had never in my life felt such a sensation of happiness.

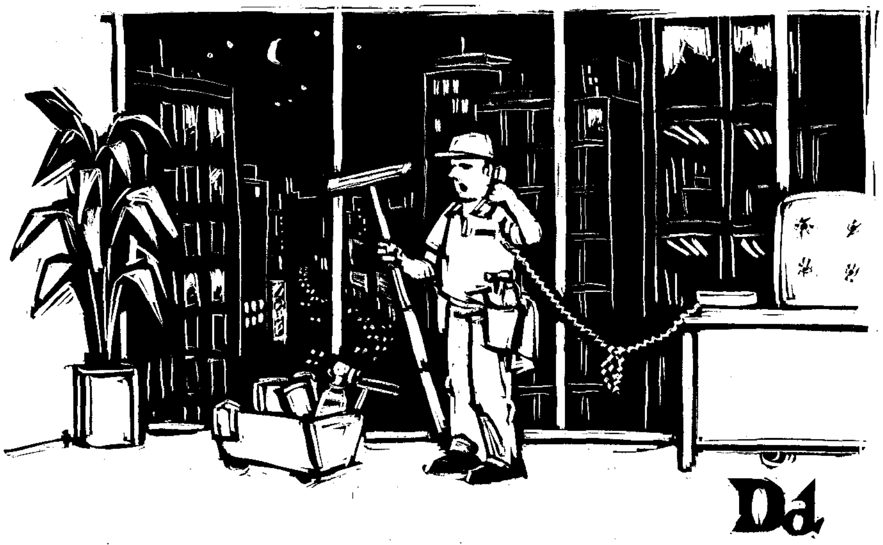
Publishing his dreams was for Greene a way of reëntering a past that had become permeable and as fascinatingly fantastic as a dream. Remembrance, always an element in the manipulated data of fiction, is often finally fruitful in purer form, when living presences that once crowded and threatened the rebellious imagination have been rendered by the passage of time mistily distant and legally impotent. Not only Melville turned to the past; the familiar American careers of Hemingway and Faulkner end with reminiscence—of the innocent Paris of Hemingway's young manhood and artistic apprenticeship in "A Moveable Feast," and of Yoknapatawpha County and Memphis as experienced by an eleven-year-old boy in Faulkner's "The Reivers: A Reminiscence."

The past in one sense recedes but in another gains in interest as the writer ages and the stage of the present empties of decisive action. Henry James at the outset of the twentieth century brought to a triumphant climax his sustained practice of fiction with three stately novels that are marvels of prolonged design and elaborate sensibility—"The Wings of the Dove" (1902), "The Ambassadors" (1903), and "The Golden Bowl" (1904). He then, always an industrious critic and essayist, quite turned from the disguises and shifts of fiction. He went back to America for the first time in twenty-one years and wrote of what he saw and what he remembered in "The American Scene" (1906). He revisited his creative, European past in the eighteen autobiographical prefaces to the twenty-four volumes of the New York edition of his selected works (1907-09). And he wrote two volumes of autobiography, "A Small Boy and Others" (1911) and "Notes of a Son and Brother" (1914).

However, in 1909 his stagestruck side, still smarting from the hooted failure of his play "Guy Domville," in 1895, was appealed to by a request from the Duke of York's Theatre that he contribute a play to a London repertory season organized by J. M. Barrie and the American producer Charles Frohman. He responded, intensely, by writing a play in the last weeks of 1909, called "The Outcry," based upon a newsworthy incident wherein a public protest prevented the American plutocrat Henry Clay Frick from buying a Holbein portrait from the Duke of Norfolk. In May of 1910, the death of Edward VII closed London's theatres, and James, who had not been well himself, responded to this latest theatrical frustration by turning the unproduced "Outcry" into a novel, using the play's dialogue little changed and nestling it in prose that closely resembles stage directions; the characters, announced by butlers, busily enter and exit. Reading it, one has a clear vision of a proscenium stage as it entertains quarrels and clinches in brisk succession. A jaunty curiosity not two hundred pages long, "The Outcry" is seldom pondered by contemporary Jamesians but at the time was something of a success, outselling "The Golden Bowl." In its high-spoken mood of romp and rampant intellectuality, not to say the feminism forthrightly embodied by its conquering heroines, it resembles a play by Shaw, who was also invited to contribute to the doomed repertory season.

The cumbersome though finely painted charabanc of the late James style is pulled swaying along by a frisky pony of a plot, farcical and romantic, designed for stage-lit action. This most expatiatory and archly loquacious of novelists is obliged to hold the reins tight. The patter of his incongruous verbal felicities is invigorating; the style itself participates in the comedy. We feel on our faces—we, the reader and the sixty-seven-year-old author—the breeze of the senile sublime, a creativity liberated from its usual, anxiety-producing ambitions. The playful labor of this translation of drama into narrative was undertaken, Jean Strouse tells us in her introduction to the newest reprint of "The Outcry," in the wake of "an acute depressive breakdown" brought on by the tepid reception of the New York edition, to which James had devoted heroic editorial effort, introducing and at times drastically revising his life's work.

Iris Murdoch's descent into the forgetfulness and incoherence of Alzheimer's disease was vividly described in the memoirs "Iris" and "Elegy for Iris," by her husband, John Bayley. The motion picture, starring Judi Dench, based on the memoirs shows the formerly prolific, consummately intelligent novelist pitifully struggling with the manuscript of the novel that was her last, "Jackson's Dilemma" (1995). The novel was well enough received by critics: the San Francisco *Examiner & Chronicle Review* called it "the kind of poetical feast that Shakespeare provided in *The Tempest*. . . . She has never written more lucidly or more lyrically"; Harold Bloom in the *Times Book Review* said it demonstrated "Murdoch's particular mastery." I read "Jackson's Dilemma" fearing that the author—who didn't remember writing the book by the time she received finished copies from the publisher—had embarrassed herself, but the novel is not a steep falling off. It has wispy, stylized, and casually irrational elements, but so do her major works. The protagonist of "The Sea, the Sea" (1978) is miraculously rescued from a maelstrom by his cousin, an adept in yogic levitation; in "The Philosopher's Pupil" (1983), a flying saucer sends out a ray that blinds the novel's hero. The membrane between our chaotic inner lives and external material reality is permeable in Murdoch—she writes of the U.F.O. incident, "The inner is the outer, the outer is the inner: an old story, but who really understands it?" An early novel like "The Flight from the Enchanter" (1956) presents no fewer puzzles and implausibilities than the last. The most prominent weakness of "Jackson's Dilemma," for me, lies with the eponymous Jackson; one of Murdoch's many spoiled priests, wistful for faith but not secure in it, he has no clear role (or dilemma) among the restless and self-indulgent English élite as they impulsively, wastefully shuttle from country home to London and back. We end in Jackson's head: "Is it all a *dream*, yes, perhaps a dream. . . . Death, its closeness. . . . Was I in prison once? I cannot remember. At the end of what is necessary, I have come to a place where there is no road." Perhaps presumptuously, we imagine ourselves admitted to the mind of the author, as she feels her grip on the real world loosening. But her creative artistry lasted up to the verge of what Hawthorne called "a drawing away of veils, a lifting of heavy, magnificent curtains."



"He's gone home for the night. Is it squeegee-related?"

• •

Hawthorne's inability to carry forward and complete "The Ancestral Footprint" was, in Adorno's term, a "catastrophe" for him personally. His struggles to find the key—the handle—demonstrate what a precarious feat it is to write a novel, organizing a host of inventions and polished details into a single movement toward resolution. Like sex, it is either easy or impossible. His failing physical health, his daughter Una's worsening mental health, his ambivalent and unfashionable feelings about the Civil War, the confinements of his happy marriage—he had his excuses, but there are always excuses not to do the job. He had no trouble, even as his block worsened, turning his English journals into lively, sharp-eyed, realistic essays, while, in false loyalty, perhaps, to the attic-dwelling nightwalker he had been in his youth, he tried to pen fiction by waning moonlight.

He drank excessively, it was rumored, and Henry Green—an aristocrat of a non-Puritan sort—certainly did. There is a kind of gallantry, a Rimbaudesque flamboyance, in Green's premature embrace of silence; he produced the novel intended (he hinted) to be his last, "Concluding" (1948), when he was forty-three. He then let his creative instincts be seduced, by midlife affairs with younger women, into two more novels, "Nothing" (1950) and "Doting" (1952), both dialogue-dominated, and written with an impeccable economy, but their translucence feels clouded by an air of corruption and defeat, especially "Doting," with its madly bibulous ending.

A geriatric ebb of energy is bound to affect late works, not necessarily to their detriment. A "Billy Budd" produced in Melville's thirties might have been as full of bumptious bombast as "Mardi." The later work's style, pedestrian and legalistic at intervals, at others slips into a metaphoric vein as primally strange as imagery in Hawthorne and "The Pilgrim's Progress." Of the demonic Claggart:

> But upon any abrupt unforeseen encounter a red light would flash forth from his eye like a spark from an anvil in a dusk smithy. That quick, fierce light was a strange one, darted from orbs which in repose were of a color nearest approaching a deeper violet, the softest of shades.

Outer becomes inner; the images take on a heated life of their own, freed from reality. "Late style," Said wrote in paraphrase of Adorno, "is what happens if art does not abdicate its rights in favor of reality." How real is death to those who still live? When the Shavian torrent dwindled to a trickle, it still twinkled; in his preface to "Buoyant Billions" Shaw tells us that death is real, but in such a sprightly fashion that we do not believe it. Art comes, it may be, from the death-denying portion of the psyche, deeper than reason's reach. Repeatedly, Shakespeare's sonnets defy time:

Yet do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

The last four plays that can be assigned to Shakespeare's exclusive authorship, the romances, deny death the last word, though deaths occur: in "Cymbeline," the odious Cloten dies; in "The Winter's Tale" the staunch Antigonus, with the famous stage direction "Exit, pursued by a bear," on the unreal seacoast of Bohemia. In all of them, the climactic events defy plausibility with wonderful returns from the dead or the lost. "The Tempest," like Beethoven's late compositions, refuses, in Adorno's phrase, to "reconcile in a single image what is not reconciled." Said wrote, "What I find valuable in Adorno is this notion of tension, of highlighting and dramatizing what I call irreconcilabilities." "The Tempest" affirms Prospero's death wish and retirement, and also Miranda's wonder, her naïve eagerness to live and to love. She has not yet come to the end of what is necessary. Father and daughter, far from irreconcilable, are onstage together. ♦

FICTION

BAD NEIGHBORS

BY EDWARD P. JONES

Even before the fracas with Terence Stagg, people along both sides of the 1400 block of Eighth Street NW could see the Benningtons for what they really were. First, the family moved in not on a Saturday or on a weekday but on a Sunday, which was still the Lord's Day, even though church for many was now a place to visit only for a wedding or a funeral. Perhaps Easter or Christmas. And those watching that Sunday, from behind discreetly parted brocade curtains and from porches rarely used except to enter and leave homes, had to wonder why the Bennington family had even bothered to bring most of their furniture. They had a collection of junk that included a stained queen-size mattress, a dining-room table with three legs, a mirror with a large piece missing from one corner, and a refrigerator dented on two sides. One neighbor joked to his wife that the Bennington refrigerator probably wouldn't work without a big block of ice in it. During the move, the half-dressed little Benningtons occupied themselves by running to and from the two small moving trucks, carrying in clothes that had busted out of cardboard boxes during the trip from whatever countrified shack they had left behind. Over the next two weeks, it became clear that the house at 1406 Eighth, with its three bedrooms, would be home to at least twelve people, though that number was fluid. The neighbors could never get a proper accounting, and they would never know who was related to whom.

They came in the middle of October, the Benningtons, bringing children—a bunch of perhaps five, from a two-year-old to a girl on the verge of being a teen-ager. Children who sometimes played outside on Friday and Saturday nights until nearly nine-thirty. And they were loud children, loud in a neighborhood where most of the kids were now in their teens and did no more harm than turn their portable radios up too high as they washed their parents' cars. Then, there was Neil, a tenth grader, and Amanda, a girl of no more than eighteen, who seemed to live night and day in tight bluejeans. She would be wearing them in her yard one early afternoon months later when Bill Forsythe, next door at 1408, stood at his bedroom window looking down at her with his second drink in his hand.

LOU BROOKS

And the Benningtons came with a few young men, who sat on the porch on a legless couch covered with a cheap bedspread, drinking from containers in paper bags. But over the first two months that the Benningtons lived on Eighth Street most of those men, none more than forty years old, simply disappeared, until, by mid-December, the only one the neighbors still saw was Derek. He was a well-built and often shirtless loudmouth in his early twenties, who seemed to go off, maybe to some job, whenever he could get his nineteen-year-old Ford to run; it was the kind of car most of the established men on Eighth Street had owned on their way up to where they were now.

Grace Bennington appeared to be the matriarch; she might have been fifty, but, with her broad weight and her gray hair, it was difficult for anyone to be certain. On a good day, her Eighth Street neighbors might have said forty or forty-five, but on a bad day seventy-five would not have seemed unfair. Only one thing was certain—she had known hard work, and it showed in face and body. She moved about on stubby legs, favoring the outer sides of her feet as she walked, so that all her shoes were run down on those edges. There was also a man who looked far older than Grace, tallish, whom the neighbors sometimes saw. He always came walking up—never down—Eighth Street with bags of groceries, and he was always in the uniform of a train's sleeping-car porter. Finally, there was a woman who was rarely seen, and, when she was, the older children would be holding her hands as they took her for a walk. She wore coats and sweaters even on the warmest days, and that fall and winter saw many good days. She might have been beautiful, but no one could tell, because she was also always wearing sunglasses and a scarf pulled around to cover most of her face.

In early November, after the Benningtons had been in the neighborhood a tad more than two weeks, Sharon Palmer noticed Neil Bennington, the tenth grader, peering into his locker, in the second-floor hall at Cardozo High School. She knew very little about the family beyond what her parents and the rest of the Eighth Street neighbors were saying, and nothing they said was at all positive. Sharon lived at 1409, across from the Benningtons. A senior, she had, in the eleventh grade, become aware of her effect on boys—almost all of them. (Terence Stagg, next door at 1407, for whom she had long had eyes and heart, was a month or so from paying her any attention.) And Sharon, coming rather late to this awareness of her womanhood, had begun to take some delight in seeing boys wither as they stood close enough to her to smell the mystery that had nothing to do with perfume and look into the twinkling brown eyes she had inherited from a grandmother who had seen only the morning, afternoon, and evening of a cotton field.

When Sharon said hello Neil rose slowly, as though he knew all too well the accidents that came with quick movements. He seemed more befuddled by than taken with her femaleness after she told him who she was, and his innocence made her wish that just this once she could turn down the mystery that transformed boys into fools. He squinted and blinked, and with each blink he appeared to get closer to knowing who she was. As the brief conversation went on, it occurred to her that he was very much like one of her younger brothers—Neil and the brother forever had the look of true believers who had to start every sad morning by learning all over again that the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus did not exist.

That day, she saw Neil walking alone down Eleventh Street after school and she separated from her friends to go with him the rest of the way home. She thought Neil, like her brother, was adorable, a word she had just started using. Her father, Hamilton Palmer, saw them turn the corner from P and thought nothing of it. As the morning and afternoon supervisor at the main Post Office, on North Capitol Street, he was home most days by three-thirty. He was watering plants on his porch, and as Neil said goodbye to his daughter Hamilton opened the little gate on the porch that had been installed ages ago, when his children were too small to know all the ways the world beyond the gate could hurt them.

It was three weeks later that Hamilton Palmer began to think something might be amiss. Thanksgiving had come and gone, and people all over Washington were complaining that it just didn't feel like Christmas weather. Who could think of Christmas with people still in their fall sweaters and the trees threatening to bud? Neil and Sharon turned the corner again, this time accompanied by three other students, who lived farther down Eighth. Before the four left Sharon in front of her house, Hamilton's daughter touched Neil's shoulder and the boy smiled. It was not the touch so much as the smile that bothered Hamilton. He noticed for the first time that Derek Bennington was watching everything from across the street. He could not tell for certain, but he thought he saw Derek smirking.

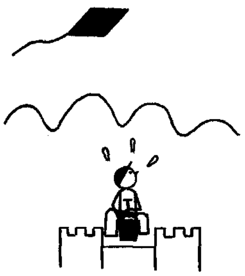
Two days later, the Prevosts, at 1404, were robbed, with a television the most expensive thing taken. No one said anything, but the neighbors knew it had to be Derek. The next week, the Thorntons, at 1414, had their car stolen. The car was only a Chevy, five years old, but that was not the point, said Bill Forsythe, at 1408. His wife, Prudence, had complained about what a noisy heap the Thornton car was and that the neighborhood was well rid of it. A man's property is a man's property, Bill said, even if it's one skate with three wheels. After the car was taken, someone called the police and they came and spoke to the Benningtons in their house for some fifteen minutes. No one knew what went down, because the police left without talking to any of the neighbors. Derek walked out onto the porch soon afterward and stood, smoking a cigarette. He was alone for a good while, and then his mother, Grace, came and said something that made him put the cigarette out in the ashtray. She continued talking, and for every second she was speaking he was nodding his head slightly.

In December, more than a month before the fracas between Derek and Terence Stagg, Sharon Palmer returned a book she had borrowed from Neil. It was a Saturday afternoon, and when she went up the steps to the Bennington home, she saw that the screen door was shut but the main door was open. She couldn't see anyone from the threshold and she called "Hello" and "Neil," and then she knocked on the wood frame of the screen door. The radio and the television were playing. She did not want to think it, but she felt that this said something about them, maybe not about Neil but about all the rest of them. She waited about two minutes, and after she again called for Neil she opened the screen and stepped into the house, saying "hello, hello, hello" all the way. The woman in the sunglasses was sitting on the couch, and when Sharon asked for Neil the woman said nothing. There was a small child on either side of her, and they were watching a black-and-white television. Sharon immediately thought about the Prevosts' television, but she did not know if it had been color or black-and-white.

"I knocked, but I got no answer," Sharon said. "Is Neil here? I brought his book back." The woman tilted her head to the side as though to consider what she had heard. "Is he here?" The children were silent and their eyes were big, as though Sharon were a creature they had not seen before. Sharon told the woman again that she was looking for Neil. It would be better, Sharon thought, if I could see her eyes. Finally, the woman turned her face toward the next room. "Thank you," Sharon said.

The dining room was crowded with boxes, the state it must have been in since the day the Benningtons moved in. The dining table's missing leg had been replaced with one that had yet to be painted the color of the rest of the table.

"Hello, Neil? Neil?" She stepped into the kitchen, and she was not prepared for what she saw. It was immaculate, the kind of room her mother would be happy with. The floor was clean, the counters were clean, the stove was clean, the tiny table and its three chairs were clean. "Hello?" She turned and looked about the room with great curiosity. When she turned back, Derek was standing at the open screen door to the back yard, watching her.



"You lost?"

"No, I'm sorry. I knocked but no one answered."

"The May maid swayed away to pray in the day's hay," Derek said, not smiling. "Thas why you got no answer."

"I just came to return Neil's book. Is he here?"

Derek shouted twice for Neil. "Well, you can just leave it on the table, lady from across the street."

"He said that I could borrow another one. A book of Irish stories the library doesn't seem to have."

He shouted for Neil again, and, as she listened to his voice thunder through the house, she noticed a small bookcase beside the refrigerator. Four shelves, each a little more than two feet across. He saw her looking at it. "Just leave the book on the table. That readin fool'll get it."

"I can come back for the next one another time." She set the book on the table.

"Which one was it?" He was wearing an undershirt, and it hung on him in a way that did not threaten as those shirts often did on other men. The bare muscular arms were simply bare muscular arms, not possible weapons. It was a small moment in the kitchen, but Sharon was to think of those arms years later as she stood naked and looked down at the bare arms of her husband while the red light of an expensive German clock shone down on him.

"A book of stories—Mary Lavin's 'Tales from Bective Bridge.' My teacher shared two with me and I'm hooked."

"Hooked is good cept with junk, ask any junkie," Derek said, and he looked across at the bookcase. "The almighty reader might have it upstairs or in some box somewhere. His shit is all over the fuckin place." *Shit, fuckin,* she thought. Shit, fuckin. In a few quiet, swift steps he was at the table. He took up the book and looked at the spine and wrinkled his face. "Hooked, hooked," he said. The same kind of steps took him to the bookcase. He knelt, peered a moment, and put the book between two green books on the second shelf up from the bottom. " 'L' is for Lavin," Derek said, and found the collection. " 'M' is for Mary." He looked at it front and back. "I know one thing for sure: he loves this

THE FIG TREE

Old as the world,
lithe and smooth,
her skin cool as a python's,
she offers fat tongues of syrup
embedded with her seeds.
Through lobed waxed leaves,
she gathers light for the tiny ones,
the sheen of stoma,
the enzymic chlorophyll,
drawing up with her powerful veins
exact minerals for each cell.
How calm, like a lover waiting in the garden,
her pale trunk curving, sinuous,
dripping her raw smell in the carnal air.
She sways while a thousand beating wings
deflower her.

—*Ruth Stone*

woman's work, so you bet not lose it. I think the almighty reader is part Irish and don't know it yet." In two more steps he was before her and she took the book and promised to return it just as it was. There was nothing untoward in his face—the lust, the hunger, that was in all the boys except Neil, boys with pimples and boys without. There was no smile from him and he did not look into her eyes, the twinkling and brown. He turned and went to the refrigerator and opened it. "You know," he said, his back to her and the light of the refrigerator pouring out over him, "you shouldn't be afraid of wearin blue." He took out a beer and closed the icebox with great care. "Forget the red. You wear too much red." He did not turn around but found an opener for the beer on the counter beside the icebox.

"What?"

Neil came in, with the same befuddled look he'd had the day Sharon introduced herself to him, and Derek pointed to him. "Where you been, boy?" Derek said. "Your girlfriend been waitin. You the worse fuckin boyfriend in the world."

"She ain't my girlfriend," Neil said, and raised his hand hello to Sharon.

"I gave your girlfriend one of Lavin's books, man."

"I told you she's not my girlfriend, Dee."

"Whatever, man." He drank from the beer as he walked to the back door. "You should tell your girlfriend that red really doesn't suit her. She ain't believin me, so maybe if it comes from her boyfriend." He went out the door, and Neil walked her to the front of the house.

Three neighbors saw Sharon Palmer leave the Bennington house that day—her father, Hamilton, from his upstairs bedroom, Terence Stagg, next door to the Palmers, and Prudence Forsythe, next to the Benningtons. Terence was standing at his living-room window and watched Sharon walk down the Bennington steps with a book in her hand. Neil Bennington was a wisp of a boy, not worth the notice of a young man like Terence. But Terence had seen Derek about, and like most of the men on Eighth Street he didn't think much of him; men like Derek had never seen the inside of Howard University, where Terence was in his second year, and they never would. As Sharon waited to cross Eighth, she lowered her head in a most engaging way, lowered it only for a second, as if to consider something, and Terence could see how she had filled out. Filled out in her red sweater, and her bluejeans not trampy tight but tight enough to let a man know if he should bother or not. She had filled out since the last time he had really taken a look at her, and that was a time he could not remember.

Terence was at her door that evening, asking a beaming Hamilton Palmer, who had also gone to Howard, how he was doing these warm days and then asking the father if he might talk a bit with his daughter this evening. Terence and Sharon stepped out onto the porch, and he invited her to a movie and a meal on Friday night. She had had two dates before—and one of those had been with a young man who was brother to her cousin's husband. Sharon was not one to keep a diary, but, if she had been, that meeting of a few minutes with Terence would have taken up at least two pages.

Terence called goodbye to Hamilton Palmer, who came out of the kitchen with Sharon's mother. They asked him how his studies were going, and Terence told them they were going very well and that he was hitting his stride. He was, in fact, going with a fellow Howard student, but Howard students who were not D.C. natives were taught from Day One never to venture into Washington neighborhoods except those where they could find a better class of people, meaning white people, for the most part, and so that girl from Newark would never know about Eighth Street. That Newark girl was so clingy, with her "Terence this" and her "Terence that." And, as he had watched Sharon come across Eighth, he had remembered something that his father, Lane, had recently told him: You are young and the world is your oyster. You shuck it, don't let it shuck you. What oyster would Derek ever shuck? Terence thought, as he listened to Hamilton. Well, fine, Hamilton said about Terence hitting his stride, and he came across the living room with his hand extended.

Sharon, ecstatic, did not get to Mary Lavin's "Tales from Bective Bridge" that night as she had planned. She could think of nothing but the evening with Terence. She tried sleeping, but found it was no use and so got up from bed and sat in the dark at her window, which, like the one in her parents' bedroom, faced Eighth Street. She was at the window again two weeks later, near about midnight three days before Christmas, when she saw Neil Bennington, carrying a small package that was bright even in the dark, dash across the street to her house, take the steps two at a time, and then dash back across the street to his place, his hands now apparently empty. By then, she had had a second date with Terence, and he had kissed her three times, once surprising her as he thrust his tongue into her mouth. She mistook what she felt at that moment for blossoming love. It was a rare cold night for that December, and she was tempted not to go downstairs. But she did. She opened the front door to find a small gift-wrapped package on the threshold between that door and the storm door. It had her name on it. With anxious fingers, just inside the living room, she tore open the shiny wrapping and found in a velvet-covered box a figure of brown wood, nearly perfectly carved. It was of a little girl no more than an inch and a half tall, in a dress that came down to her feet. She had on a bonnet. When Sharon held the figure to the light of a lamp, she could tell by the shape of the nose that it was a black girl. One of the girl's arms was extended somewhat, and there was a bracelet on it. That the bracelet was shining told her that it might be gold; that it was from a boy of no means from across the street told her that it might not be.

She was disappointed, because she did not want Neil to think that there could ever be anything between them, and such a thing, with such intricacy, with such compellingly quiet beauty, told her that was what he was thinking. But she did not want to hurt his feelings by returning the gift. Adorable people should not be hurt. She thought for a day and decided to give him a book, and she chose a small paperback edition of Ann Petry's "The Street." She came up to him as he stood at his locker at school, his head cocked to the side as if he were trying to decide what was needed for the final period of the day. Terence was picking her up after school. Neil seemed genuinely surprised by the gift. "I didn't get you anything," he said, blushing and blinking. "This is straight up embarrassin."

"That doesn't matter," Sharon said. "It's the season for giving. What are neighbors for?"

"I'll get you somethin, I promise," he said, biting his lip.

"You've already done a great deal. Believe me."

"All right," Neil said, moving his hand slowly down the table of contents. "All right, but I won't forget this. Ever."

More than five years later, on her way to becoming a nurse, she would attend a party at the home of one of her Georgetown professors. Her husband would not be able to be with her that night, but that was the way it had become. She would spend a good part of the evening in a corner with a glass of ginger ale. Just as she was about to excuse herself and leave, a white woman of some seventy years came up to her.

"I have been admiring that wondrous thing you're wearing," the white woman said. "Even from across the room, you can see how unique it is." She looked closer. "The carver must have used up all his eyesight making it. You have exquisite taste." The woman smiled, not at Sharon but at the Christmas gift that she had unearthed only recently from a trunk in her parents' basement.

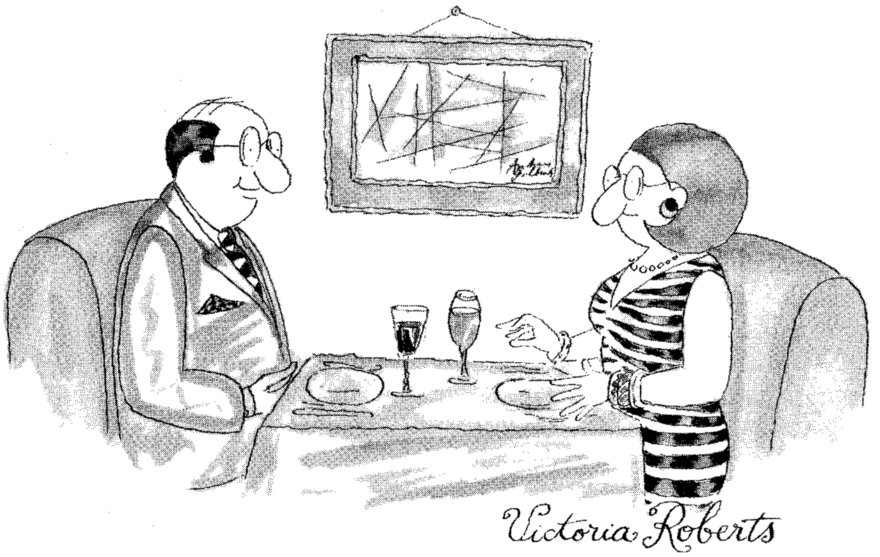
"Someone gave it to me. It isn't much."

"It is much in that other way," the woman said. "I know a place down on F Street that would give you two hundred dollars for it. Please. May I?" And the woman raised a tentative hand, and Sharon nodded, and the woman took up the little girl in the bonnet and rested it between her fingers and then looked fully into Sharon's eyes. "It's not very old, perhaps less than ten years since it was created, but the artistry makes up for that. If the carver lost his sight, he may have thought it was worth it." That evening, for the first time, Sharon would notice the initials carved into one of the folds of the girl's dress. The initials were far from evident, but they were there if the time was taken to look for them. No, she said to herself, alone in the apartment she shared with her husband, I would not sell it. I don't even know if the carver is living anymore.

It was Amanda Bennington who first got into it with Terence Stagg. Late on a Saturday morning in mid-January, she and Derek had come home from the Safeway. They parked in front of the Staggs' house, across the street, while Derek took bags of groceries into their house and Amanda tidied up the car's trunk.

Sharon Palmer was watching from her bedroom window. Nothing had really been said, but it was known by then that she and Terence were a couple and might well have a nice future together. They had driven up in his father's Cadillac one evening the week before, and she saw Neil watching from his porch. She waved and he waved back. She and Neil were not walking home together as much as they had been, but they still shared books. Derek came out as Terence walked Sharon into her house.

Terence, that Saturday morning, was heading out his door when he saw Amanda fussing around in the trunk of



"We've learned so much from each other that you remind me of me."

THE
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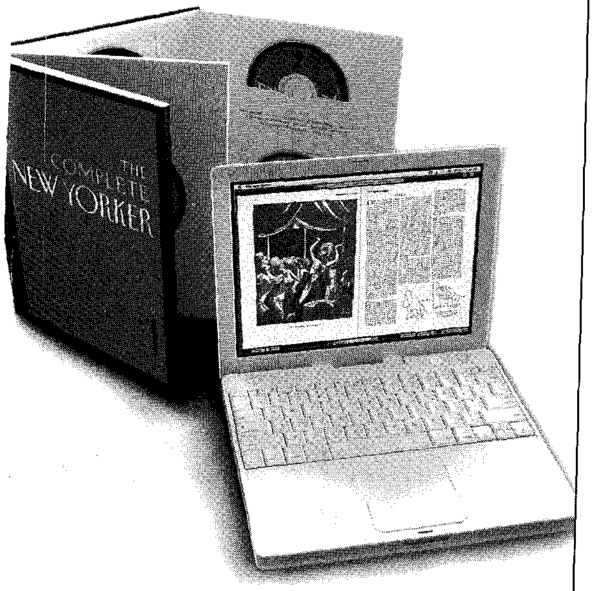
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Derek's Ford, which was parked in the spot where his father, Lane Stagg, had been parking his Cadillacs since before Terence knew what good things life had in store for him. It might as well be said that Lane Stagg owned that dot of public real estate. Before his family had awakened, Lane had gone out on an errand, purring quietly away in his new tan Cadillac, which had less than three thousand miles on it.

"Hey, you," Terence said to Amanda, and came down the steps to the sidewalk, too upset to take full notice of her behind as she bent over and puttered in the trunk. He was to excel in anatomy and dermatology when he got to Howard's medical school, but genetics and neurology would nearly cost him his future. Amanda straightened up, holding jumper cables, and looked Terence up and down. "Hey! You know you parked in my father's space?" Then, watching Amanda toss the cables back in the trunk and try to clean the dirt from her hands with a Kleenex that she had pulled from her back pocket, he pointed to Derek's car and said again, "Hey, do you know that you are parked in my father's space?" Since his first month at Howard, he had stopped referring to Lane as "my daddy."

"Hay for horses, not for people. Go down Hecht's and get em cheaper," Amanda said. They were the words of a small child, and they upset Terence even more. "It's a free country, man," Amanda said. "We all got a right to park where we wanna park." She pulled another bunched-up Kleenex from the back pocket of her jeans. She was dark and pretty, and in another universe Terence would have been able to appreciate that. "And besides"—she turned and pointed across the street—"somebody's got my brother's regular spot." That Saturday, the Forsythes, at 1408, had company from out of town, and the visitors' Trans Am was where Derek's Ford would have gone, in a spot covered with the oil that was forever leaking from his car. "We had stuff to take and it whatn't no use parkin way down at the corner. Maybe that Trans Am'll move before your daddy gets back."

"I don't care about that," Terence said. "You're just going to have to move that thing somewhere else."

Grace had been trying to teach Amanda to control her temper, but there were days and then there were days. "First off," Amanda said, "I ain't movin shit. Second off, it ain't no thing. It's a classic. Third off, you better get out my damn face. This a free country, man. You ain't no fuckin parkin police." She closed the trunk with both hands to make the loudest sound she could manage.

"I would expect something like this from trash like you," Terence said.

She flicked the Kleenex at him and he dodged it. "Since it's that way, you the biggest trash around here," she said. In another universe, before that moment Amanda would have liked him to come across the street and knock at her door and invite her to the Broadway on Seventh Street for a movie and a hamburger and soda afterward. She had seen Terence's well-dressed mother, Helen Stagg, quite often, had studied the woman as she came out of her house and looked up and down Eighth Street as if waiting for the world to tell her that it was once again worthy of having her. Amanda loved her own mother, in all her dowdiness, more than any human being, but she knew Grace would never be Helen Stagg. "If I'm trash, you trash."

"Typical," Terence said. "Real damn typical."

"Whas up here?" Derek came across the street, his keys in his hand.

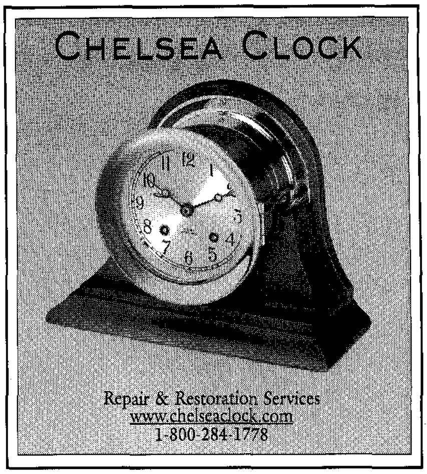
"Derek, this guy say we gotta move the car cause his father got the spot."

"Ain't nobody own no parkin spot, neighbor. This a free country, neighbor," Derek said, the keys jingling at his side.

"I'm not your neighbor."

"Oh, oh, it's like that, huh?" Derek said, turning around twice and raising his arms in faux surrender. "You one a those, huh? All right." Amanda had stayed in the street behind the car, but Derek had continued on up to the sidewalk. "All right, big shot. Les just clear away, cause I don't want no trouble. Nobody want any trouble." He stepped back into the gutter. "All I can say is we got a right to be there, as much right as your daddy and that Cadillac of his with that punk-ass color." He looked at Amanda. "You done?"

"Yeah, I'm cool."



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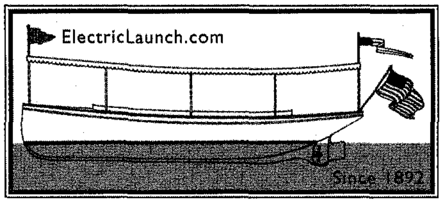

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HOLLYWOOD BOWL

"Well, les go," and they waited to cross as two cars passed going up Eighth Street.

"I told you to move that damn thing," Terence said. His knuckles tapped the top of the trunk. "You people should learn to wash your ears out." He spat on the car.

Derek turned. "Just leave that somebitch alone, Derek," Amanda said. "He ain't worth it."

Grace Bennington came out of her house and yelled at Derek to come on in. Neil stood beside her, holding the hand of a girl of seven or eight. "Wipe that shit off," Derek said of the spit, a slow-moving blob on the black paint heading down toward the fender. The car didn't always run, but he kept it clean.

Derek counted all the way to ten, and Terence said, "Tell your funky mother to wipe it off."

"Even you, even poor you," Derek said calmly, "should know the law against sayin somethin like that. Man oh man oh man . . ."

It took but one hit to the lower part of the jaw to send Terence to the ground. He had seen the fist coming, but, because he had not been in very many fights in his life, it took him far too long to realize the fist was coming for him. Grace and Amanda screamed. The Bryants, at 1401, and the Prevosts, at 1404, came out, as did the Forsythes and their company who had the Trans Am, all of them still digesting their breakfasts. Sharon Palmer had watched with growing concern from her bedroom window. She had not been able to hear all that was said by the three, but, already on the path to love, she had admired the way Terence seemed to be standing up to Derek. By the time she got downstairs and out to the sidewalk, Amanda and Grace were tending to Terence. Seconds later, he awoke and saw the women, and told them to get the fuck away from him. Derek was already back across the street, sitting on the legless couch, watching the group around Terence and smoking a cigarette and waiting for the police to show up.

Lane Stagg was more disturbed about what had happened to his son than he would have been if this had been a fight between young men of equal age and status and Terence had simply lost after doing his best. No doubt, Lane Stagg thought, men like Derek Bennington had never learned to fight fair. Terence, after a quick trip to the hospital, was out of it for a day and a half, but he suffered no permanent damage and would recover to become the first person anyone in the neighborhood knew to become a doctor. "Let them crackers," Lane Stagg said after his second drink at the dinner to celebrate his son's medical-school graduation, "write that up in the immigration brochures about how descendants of slaves aren't any good and so all you hardworking immigrants just come on over."

The police came out that Saturday, but, because they didn't like doing paperwork and because no white person had been hurt, Derek was not arrested. He would not fare as well after the complaint weeks later by the white man from Arlington who owned the Bennington home. The white man and his family had been the last whites to live in the neighborhood. "Come on over to Arlington," his former neighbors kept telling him after they themselves had moved. "Over here, the blacks are all off in their own neighborhood, so you hardly ever see them." The white man and his wife had a son, deep into puberty, and the son was growing ever more partial to blondes, which Eighth Street didn't grow anymore.

After Terence came home from the hospital, Lane, working on his first drink, broached the idea of buying the house that the Benningtons were renting from the white man. He sat in his living room with his wife perched on the arm of his easy chair, and across from him, on the couch, were Hamilton Palmer, Arthur Atwell, and Bill and Prudence Forsythe. Lane Stagg started in on how the neighborhood was changing for the worse. And Hamilton, already seeing the Staggs as future in-laws, agreed. He was not drinking. And neither was Bill Forsythe. Prudence had quietly come upon Bill two weeks earlier looking out their bedroom window at Amanda Bennington collecting toys in her front yard. Prudence had watched him for more than five minutes before going to see what had captured him. Bill had a drink in his hand, and Amanda was wearing those tight bluejeans and it was not even one-thirty. "Nice day," Bill said to his wife, already drifting toward happy land and so unable to compose something better. "I'm fucking tired of you getting ideas," Prudence said. "I'm fucking tired of you and your ideas." "Honey," Bill said, "keep your voice down. The neighbors, honey. The neighbors." Meaning not the Benningtons, on one side, but Arthur and Beatrice Atwell, on the other. Prudence took the drink from Bill, and she did it in such a way that the ice cubes did not clink against the sides of the glass.

Lane Stagg, pained about his son, was as eloquent that evening as he would be at the last meeting of the neighbors, years later, as he argued that the building had really not housed the proper sort of folks in years. "What," he asked, "does that white man across the river in Arlington care about our neighborhood?" Lane Stagg had been the captain of his debating team in high school, when the schools had such things. He would have made a good lawyer, everyone said, but the son of a coal-and-ice man rose only so far. His wife, whose father and mother were lawyers, had married him anyway.

It was not a long meeting, but before it ended the good neighbors of Eighth Street decided that they would raise the money and buy the house and rent it to more agreeable people. "Let's drink to that," Lane said, and stood up. About then, Sharon Palmer came down from upstairs, where she had been comforting Terence. The medicine had finally overcome him and he had fallen asleep. "Thank you, sweet Sharon, thank you, thank you," Lane said, and he set his drink on the table beside his chair and put his arms around her. "It was the least I could do," she said.

After everyone had left, and his wife had gone to bed, Lane sat beside his son's bed. He had enjoyed his house for a long time, and it saddened him, beyond the effects of the liquor, to think that he would not see his grandchildren enjoy it. He loved Washington, and as he sat and watched Terence sleep he feared he would have to leave. He was hearing good things about Prince George's County, but that place, abutting the more redneck areas of the Maryland suburbs, was not home to

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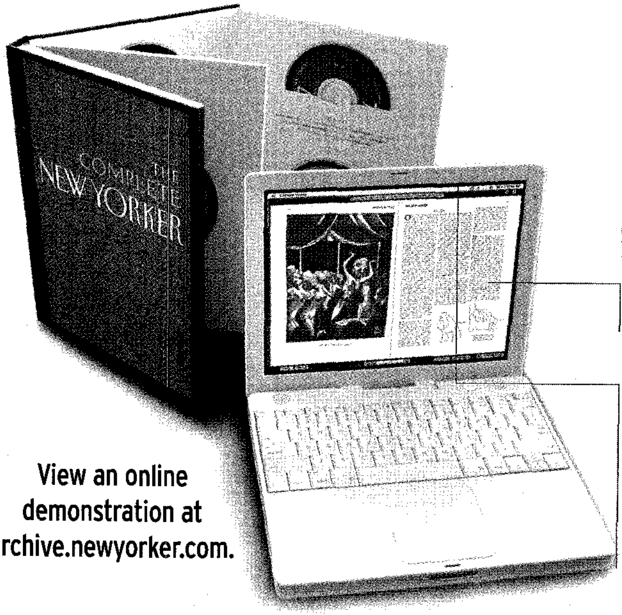

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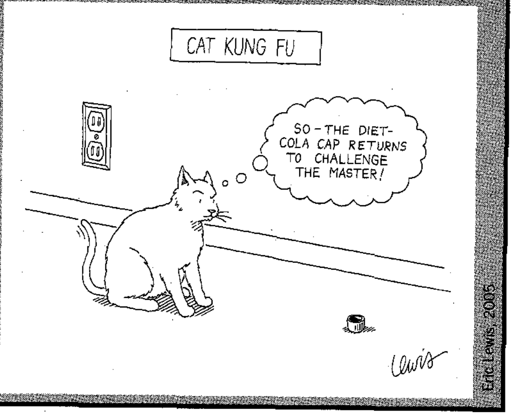
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him like D.C. He had heard, too, that the police there were brutes, straight out of the worst Southern towns, but he had come a long way since the boyhood days of helping his father deliver coal and ice throughout Washington. "Dirty nigger coal man and his dirty nigger coal son," children had called them. And that was in the colored neighborhoods of maids and shoeshiners and janitors and cooks and elevator operators. But he was a thousand lives from that now, even though he wasn't anybody's lawyer. With his reputation as a GS-15 at the Commerce Department and a wife high up in the D.C. school system and a big Maryland house and a son on his way to being a doctor, he could let the police in Prince George's know just what sort he was.

The good neighbors were helped by one major thing: the white man and his wife across the Potomac who owned the Bennington house had been thinking for some time about moving to Florida. Lane Stagg, Hamilton Palmer, Arthur Atwell, and Prudence Forsythe met with the white man on the highway in Arlington named for Robert E. Lee, in a restaurant that was named for Stonewall Jackson. They offered him thirty-one thousand dollars for the Bennington house. The white man whistled at the figure. Arthur Atwell was silent, as usual. He was semi-retired and liked to think he had more money than he really did have. The white man, Nicholas Riccocelli, whistled again, this time even louder, because the thirty-one thousand sounded good—he really had no idea how much the house was worth. For several moments, he studied a cheap print of a Dutch windmill on the wall beside the table and thought about how many days on a Florida beach thirty-one thousand dollars would provide.

Riccocelli said to give him a week to think it over, but he called Lane Stagg in four days and said they had a deal. The white man had never had any trouble with the Benningtons and so he felt he owed it to Grace and her family to tell them himself formally that they would have to move. He came late one Saturday afternoon in early February. When Derek told him that his mother wasn't home, Riccocelli wanted to know if she would be gone long.

"If there's something important," Derek said, "you can tell me." And when the white man told him that they would have to be gone in two months, Derek turned from his spot in the middle of the living room to look at Amanda and Neil standing in the doorway to the dining room. "Can you believe this shit?" he said. Then, to Riccocelli, he asked, "Why? Ain't we always paid rent on time? Ain't we?"

"Yes, but the new owners would like to start anew."

"Who are they?" Derek said. "You tell em we good tenants and everything'll be all right."

"I'm afraid," the white man said, "that will not work. The new owners wish to go in another direction altogether."

"Who the fuck are these people? What kinda direction you talkin about?" Derek said, and came two steps toward the man.

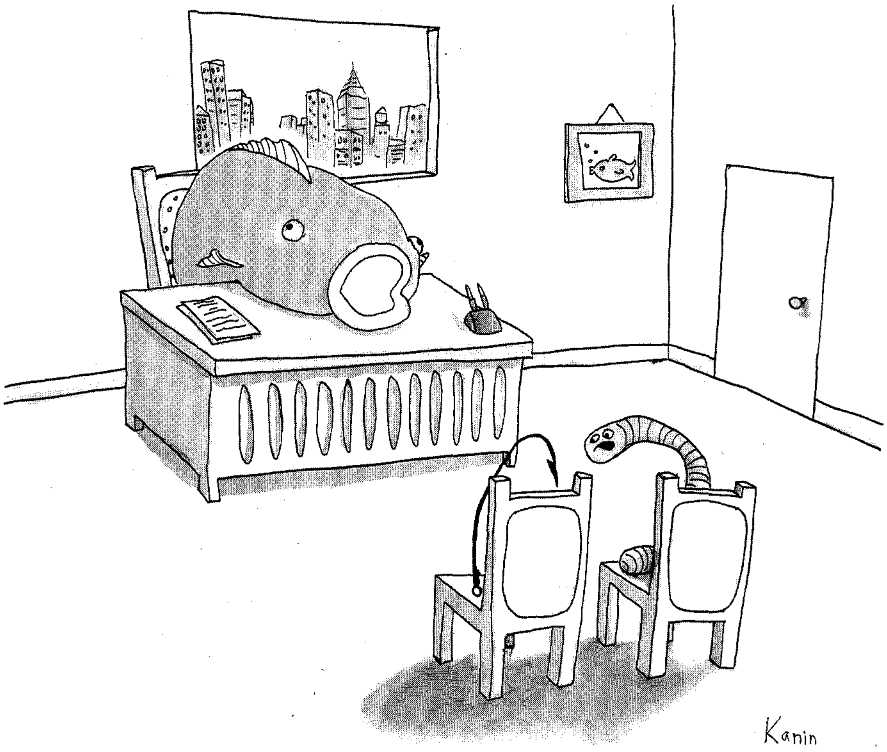
"Why . . . why . . ." Riccocelli was unable to complete the sentence, because he had thought their neighbors would have somehow let the Benningtons know. "Why, your neighbors around you." The man sensed something bad was about to happen and backed toward the front door. Where, he wondered, was the mother? She had always seemed so sensible.

"Get the fuck out!" Derek said, and grabbed the man by his coat collar. Riccocelli opened the door and Derek pushed him out. "You sorry motherfucker!" The woman who always wore sunglasses, seated between two children on the couch, began to cry, and the children, following her, began crying as well.

"Derek, leave him alone," Amanda said. "Leave him be."

Out on the porch, Derek still had Riccocelli by the collar. He pulled him down the stairs. "Derek!" Amanda shouted. "Please!"

"Don't hurt me, Mr. Bennington." The ride over from Arlington had been pleasant enough. Riccocelli was a small man, and his eyes barely came above the dashboard, but he enjoyed driving. There had been gentle and light snow most of the way from Arlington, and a few times he had seen lightning across the sky. Snow and lightning. How could a day like that go wrong? He would miss the snow in Florida, he had thought as he drove across Key Bridge. Now, as the two men stumbled and fell down the steps to the sidewalk, there



"I think this one's in the bag."

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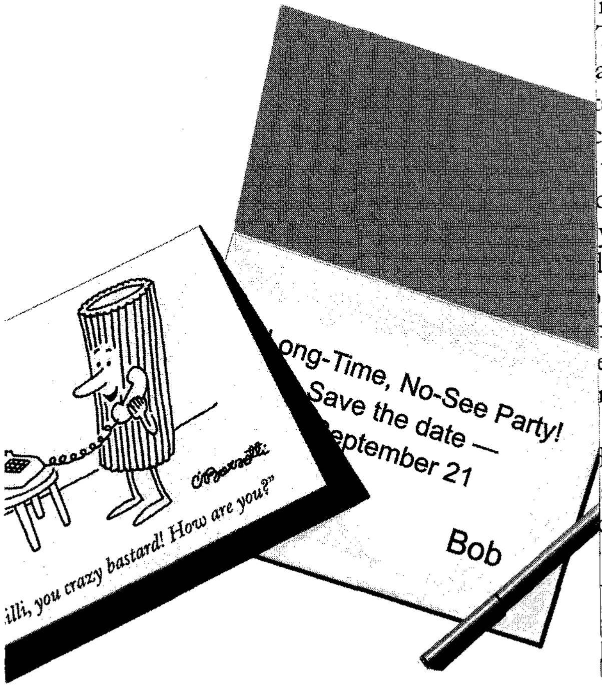
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her, loud, singing a song for her to understand. She) such crowds—George- ents, many with bogus n cards that they used to it the bars along Wiscon- and M Street.

been married for nine : was a little more than three meeting the white woman Terence Stagg was in med- at Howard. His maternal s, the attorneys, had been ar accident by a drunken was himself an attorney, d left their only grandchild y than was good for him. l his wife lived quite well in per Northwest Washing- ne likes of the Benningtons erve.

re Sharon reached Thirty- the group of young men ler a street light and she at two of them were white d was black. The black stu- so feet from her, said to udents, "I spy with my lit- thing good to eat," and the l out and blocked her from always have these fanta- nurses and sponge baths," ne said. She was wearing n and that had told them ded to know. They came ree feet of her and one of udents held his arms out to ile the other two men sur- r. She did not hear the car l her open and close. k student touched her cheek r breasts with both hands, the white students did the both young men breathed to her face. Sharon pulled ne two looked at each other . As the black student in- y for another blast into her hing punched him in the ace and he fell hard against ssed out. "Hey! Hey!" the nt who had had his hands aid to the puncher. "What- ur Rufus?" The puncher on back behind him and e from a long time ago and uckled to see it. He might een a ghost, because she him in many years. "They

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spoil the best nights we have," Derek said to her.

The white student who had not touched her pulled out a knife, the blade more than three inches long. Derek reached into his own pocket, but before his hand came out the white student had stabbed him in his left side, through his leather jacket, through his shirt, into the vicinity of his heart, and Sharon screamed as Derek first faltered and then pulled himself up. In a second his switchblade was out and the blade tore through the student's jacket and into his arm, and the student ran out into P Street and down toward his university. "I wanted to keep this clean," Derek said. "But white trash won't let me."

"We didn't mean anything," the second white student said as he sobered up. He raised his arms high. "See—"

"Oh, you fucks always mean somethin," Derek said, holding his knife to the man's cheek and flicking it once to open a wound in the cheek, less than an inch from his nostrils. The man crumpled, both hands to his face. His black friend was still unconscious, and the man with the arm wound was shouting as he ran that they were all being killed by niggers. Derek sheathed the knife and returned it to his pocket and then pulled Sharon down the street to his car.

Within moments he had driven them down P, slowly, across Wisconsin, and to a spot just before the P Street Bridge. He turned on the light and inspected his side. "Shit!" he said. "Bad but maybe not fatal. Damn!"

"Let me help you," Sharon said.

After looking in the sideview mirror, he continued down P Street again, slowly. Two patrol cars sped past them, and she watched him watching them go in the rearview mirror. "Dead or alive, the black dude won't matter," he said to the mirror, joining the traffic moving around Dupont Circle. "But them white dudes are princes and the world gon pay for that." He became part of the flow going up Connecticut Avenue. "And it happened in Georgetown. They'll make sure somebody pays for that. But they were drunk and so describin might be a problem. Real drunk." He seemed unaware that she was there. "Thas why you never went to college, Derek. Black people gotta leave all their common sense at the front door. College is the business of miseducatin. Like them people would ever open the door anyway." She feared he might pass out, and she was comforted by the fact that in the near darkness of the car she could not see blood creeping around to the right side from the left. Two more police cars passed them, screaming. "They gonna pull that one patrol car they have in Southeast and the only one they got in Northeast and bring em over here to join the dozens they keep in Georgetown. You watch, Derek," he said to a carved wooden figure dangling from the rearview mirror. "You just watch."

"Derek," she said. "Stop and let me help you."

They had crossed Calvert, they had crossed Woodley, and he looked at her for the first time since they had entered the car. "I lied," he said. "I lied. Red wasn't a bad color. It was way good enough for you. Any color you put on is a good color, didn't you know that? You make the world. It ain't never been the other way around. You first, then the world follows." They were nearing Porter. Two blocks from the University of the District of Columbia he stopped, not far from her condominium building, which had one of the few doormen in Washington. "You can walk the rest of the way home," he said. "All the bad thas gonna happen to you done already happened."

She moved his jacket aside and saw where the blood had darkened his blue shirt, and when she touched him the blood covered her hand and began to drip. "Come with me and let me help you." And as she said this her mind ticked off the actual number of years since she had last seen him. Three days later she would have it down to months as well. She took a handkerchief and Kleenex from her pocketbook and pressed them gently to his side. "It's bad, but manageable, I think. We need to get you help, though."

He took her hand and placed it in her lap. "Let me be," he said. "You best get home. You best go home to the man you married to."

"Come in. You helped me, so let me help you."

"You should tell that glorious husband of yours that a wife should be protected, that he shouldn't be sleepin while you have to come home through the jungle of some white neighborhood. Tell him thas not what bein married should be about."

She took the bloody handkerchief and Kleenex and returned them to her pocketbook. She did not now want to go home. She wanted to stay and go wherever he was going to go to recover. She snapped the pocketbook shut. Her father had walked her down the aisle, beaming all the way at the coming together of his two favorite families. The church had been packed and Terence had stood at the altar, waiting, standing as straight as he could after a night of drinking and pals and two strippers who had taken turns licking his dick.

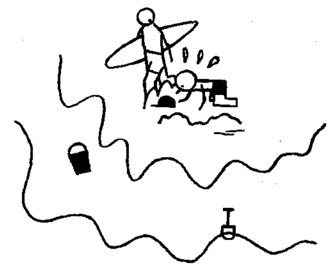
"You best go home."

"Please," she said. "Let me stay."

He reached across her and opened the door. "And one last thing," he said. "Neil been at me for the longest time to have me tell you it was never him. He was always afraid that you went about thinkin he was stuck on you, and he wanted me to set the record straight. He was always doin my biddin and now I'll do his and set the record straight." How long can the heart carry it around? How long? The answer came to her in a whisper.

She got out and shut the door, and he continued on up Connecticut Avenue, his back red lights, brightly vital, soon merging with all the rest of the lights of the Washington night. The man in the shop had promised that her BMW would be ready by the end of the week. Terence's Mercedes had never seen a bad day.

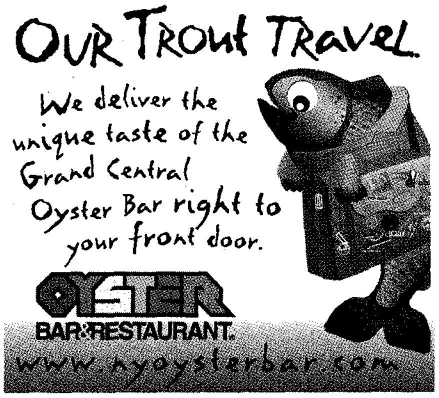
As soon as she locked the door to their condominium, she heard the hum of the new refrigerator, and then the icemaker clicked on and ice tumbled into the bucket, as if to welcome



her home. The fan over the stove was going, and she turned it off, along with the light over the stove, the two switches side by side. In the living room, she noticed the blood on her uniform; if the doorman had seen the blood, he made no comment. In the half-darkness, the spots seemed fresh, almost alive in some eerie way, as if the blood had just that second come from Derek's wound. Bleeding. Bleedin. She had emerged unscathed. The overhead fan of grand golden wood was going, slowly, and she considered for the longest time whether to switch it off. In the end, she chose to stop the spinning. Her family had moved away from Eighth Street when she was in college, more than two years after the Benningtons left. And they had been followed by the Forsythes and the Prevosts and all the people she had known as she grew into womanhood. We are the future, Lane Stagg had proclaimed at a final dinner party at the Sheraton Hotel for the good neighbors. Who was left there now? Bad neighbors, her father had called those who came after them. Bad neighbors. The dinner party was held not long before the first contingent of whites had come back and planted their flags. The motor on the fishtank hummed right along; the light over the tank was on, and she turned that off. The stereo, which had cost the equivalent of seven of her paychecks, was not playing, but the power light was on, and she pushed the button to put the whole console to rest. She placed one finger against the fishtank, and all the fish in their colorful finery ignored it. Her father had risen at that hotel dinner and given the first toast, his hand trembling and his voice breaking at every fifth word.

Terence was sleeping peacefully, his arms and shoulders bare, and one foot sticking out of the covers, the fine German clock's dull red numbers shining down on him from the bedside table with the reassurance of a child's night-light. Her father hated such clocks, the digital ones that told the time right out; he believed, as he had tried to teach Sharon and her brothers, that children should learn to tell time the way he had learned, with the big hand and the little hand moving around a circle of numbers. She stood in the doorway and watched Terence and the clock, and for all the time she was there he did not stir. A burglar could come in, she thought, and he would never know it. She could stab him to death and end his world and he would never know it. She could smother him. The whole world could end and he would not know that, either. The insurance they paid on all that they owned—not including the cars and their own lives, which had separate policies—came to $273.57 a month. It is worth it, the white insurance man had said as he dotted the final "i," "because you will sleep better at night knowing you are protected." Knowing. Knowin.

She got out of her clothes in the bathroom, took off everything she had on, even her underwear, and found that the blood had seeped through all the way to her skin. She held her uniform up before her. She stared at her name tag and found it hard to connect herself with the name and the uniform and the naked person they belonged to. Am I really who they say I am? Bleeding. Bleedin. None of Derek's people had ever used the "g" on their -ing words; one of the first things she herself had been taught early in life was never to drop the "g." The "g" is there for a reason, they had told her. It separates you from all the rest of them, those who do not know any better. Sharon did not shower. Another Sharon in another time might have been unsettled by his appearing from nowhere, by the thought that he had been following her. But the idea that he had been there, out there in weather of whatever sort, out there in the dark offering no sign and no sound, out there for months and perhaps years, seemed to give her something to measure her life by. She did not yet know how to do that. After she turned out the bathroom light, she stood in the dark for a long time. In their bedroom, she decided against putting on underwear and so got into bed the way she came into the world. Terence stirred, pulled his foot back under the covers, but beyond that he did nothing. Almost imperceptibly, the rightmost red number on the expensive German clock went from two to three. ♦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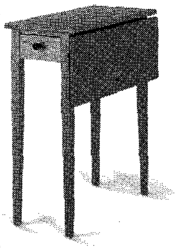

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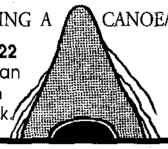

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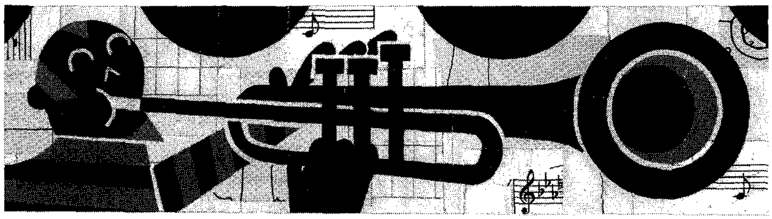


BOOKS

SAM I AM

Beckett's private purgatories.

BY BENJAMIN KUNKEL

"We're not beginning to . . . to . . . mean something?" one character asks another in Samuel Beckett's 1958 play "Endgame." It turns out to be a well-warranted concern. Beckett's writings constitute probably the most significant body of work produced by a twentieth-century author, in that they're taken to signify the greatest number of things. "You might call Beckett the ultimate realist," one eminent critic says, while the title of Anthony Cronin's fine 1997 biography calls him "the last modernist," and, equally, thanks to his spiralling self-referentiality, he's often accounted the first postmodernist. Emptying his books of plot, descriptions, scene, and character, Beckett is said to have killed off the novel—or else, by showing how it could thrive on self-sabotage, insured its future. A contemporary playwright suggests that Beckett will remain relevant "as long as people still die." Introducing Beckett's later novels in a new Grove edition of the writer's work issued to mark his centenary this year, Salman Rushdie takes the opposite—or, life being what it is, perhaps the identical—view: "These books, whose ostensible subject is death, are in fact books about life." One of the most purposely obscure writers of the last century has become all things to all people. On my bookshelf I also have a volume that I picked up as a nineteen-year-old trekker in Kathmandu: "Beckett and Zen." Since Beckett got from Schopenhauer what Schopenhauer had found in Buddhism, the connection is not far-fetched. And, come to think of it, a long practice of za-zen might be required before we could so empty our minds as to open up one of Beckett's texts and hear simply the words that are there.

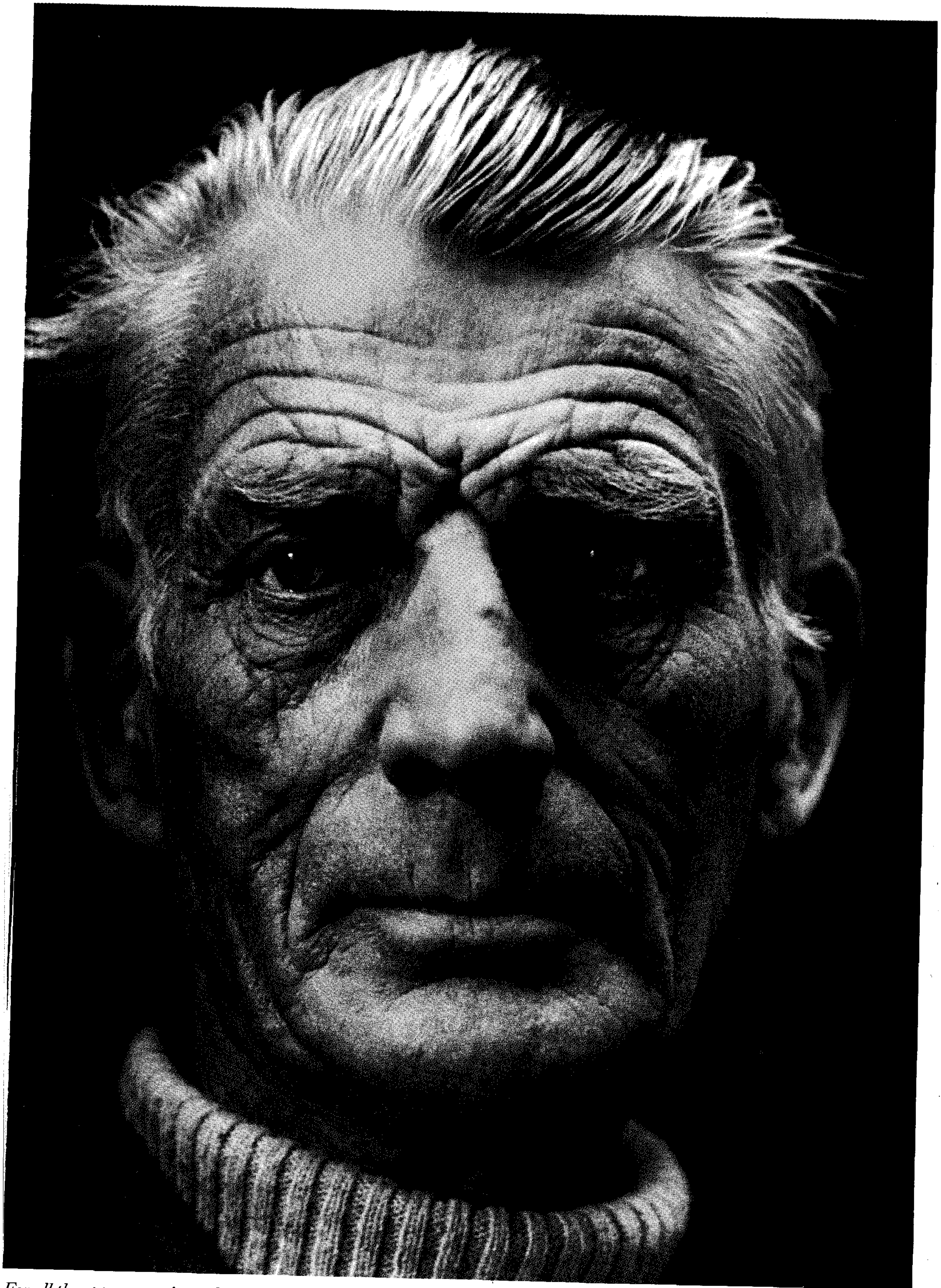
Why does every literary cause want to recruit Beckett? What is the eagerness, among all parties, to claim as their own the author of the following not at all unrepresentative passage from "Molloy," the first book of the famous trilogy on which Beckett's high reputation as a novelist rests? Here—and if it seems a bit long, consider the paragraph of some eighty pages in which it occurs—the ancient, decrepit Molloy reminisces over the creature who first acquainted him with love:

> She went by the peaceful name of Ruth, I think, but I can't say for certain. Perhaps the name was Edith. She had a hole between her legs, oh not the bunghole I had always imagined, but a slit, and in this I put, or rather she put, my so-called virile member, not without difficulty, and I toiled and moiled until I discharged or gave up trying or was begged by her to stop. A mug's game in my opinion and tiring on top of that, in the long run. But I lent myself to it with a good enough grace, knowing it was love, for she had told me so. She bent over the couch, because of her rheumatism, and in I went from behind. It was the only position she could bear, because of her lumbago. It seemed all right to me, for I had seen dogs, and I was astonished when she confided that you could go about it differently. I wonder what she meant exactly. Perhaps after all she put me in her rectum. A matter of complete indifference to me, I needn't tell you. But is it true love, in the rectum? That's what bothers me sometimes. Have I never known true love, after all? She too was an eminently flat woman and she moved with short stiff steps, leaning on an ebony stick. Perhaps she too was a man, yet another of them. But in that case surely our testicles would have collided, while we writhed. Perhaps she held hers tight in her hand, on purpose to avoid it.

This is fun to read, but what nasty fun! On the following page, Molloy recalls "the indifference with which I learnt of her death." Granted, it was "an indifference softened indeed by the pain of losing a source of revenue." The Beckett of the novels is not a very efficient writer—exhaustion is his method—but he can probably condense more cackling blasphemies onto a single page than anyone else. The tributes swirling around him this year rightly place his work in the context of debts to Joyce, Proust, and Dante. They tend to overlook the fact that reading Beckett is frequently like watching the Western canon stick its fingers down its throat.

His aggressiveness toward the reader notwithstanding, Beckett is the most *prestigious* writer around. A number of factors converge to make this so. There is his long residency in Paris during the years that it was still the world capital of literature. There is his association with the preëminent modernists in two languages: he'd assisted Joyce during the composition of "Finnegans Wake" and published a monograph on Proust, in 1930. Translating himself from French into English and sometimes from English into French, Beckett became a great writer in both languages, and seemed lifted clear of nationality at a time when nationality appeared the besetting sin of belligerent humanity.

After the worldwide success of "Waiting for Godot," in the fifties, Beckett became what he remains today: an icon not only in the pop-cultural sense but in the original meaning of a picture of a saint. "The human condition" is the constantly, rather emptily tolling phrase in postwar discussion of his work, which was taken to depict a humanity martyred by memories of war, atomic dread, the death of God. Beckett's small but noble role in the French Resistance authenticated the impression of an existentialist saint, as did his widely attested kindness and remarkable (not to say masklike) courtesy as a person. He disliked publicity, gave away his Nobel Prize money, and lived in spartan rooms across a courtyard from a prison whose inmates he could hear howl. It didn't hurt that he took a good picture. A beautiful man, tall and thin, his face incised with eloquent suffering, peering at the camera with cold, unwavering eyes, he looked as if his friend



For all the apparent universality of Beckett's work, his sources of inspiration were highly personal. Photograph by Jane Brown.

Giacometti had fashioned him out of skin and bones.

Easy on the eyes, Beckett is, however, a hard read. His plays continue to be performed, but as a novelist—and he considered playwriting "mainly a recreation from working on the novel"—he is increasingly more honored than read. This is too bad, because Beckett's fiction, whether or not it is the summit of his achievement, is its heart. Meanwhile, vague and grand ideas about Beckett flourish because he goes unread. "A voice comes to one in the dark": this, the first line of the late novella "Company," also describes the ideal situation of his contemporary reader, as innocent and as apprehensive as that, as ready to be startled. Strange stuff, this work, that life.

As if to tease the symbol-hunter, Beckett was born on Good Friday; he died, eighty-three years later, on the second day of winter. The earlier event took place in 1906, in Foxrock, a well-to-do Protestant enclave just south of Dublin. Beckett's feelings for his good-natured and indulgent father, the proprietor of a land-surveying business, seem to have been fairly uncomplicated. Things were different with his mother, a tall, angular lady of notable severity and reserve. Similar temperaments made mother and son very close and also, these temperaments being what they were, far apart. But Beckett seems to have been telling the truth when he said he had a happy childhood. Undoubtedly he was a good student and a gifted athlete: at Portora Royal School, a mostly Protestant boarding school that counted Oscar Wilde among its alumni, he excelled at Latin and cricket. (Beckett remained a sports fan all his life, watching a lot of tennis on TV, and speculating that had James Joyce been a rugby player he would have made "a very nippy scrum-half.")

At Trinity College, Dublin, Beckett began to frequent playhouses and pubs. Irish variety theatre—a sort of indigenous vaudeville in which, according to Anthony Cronin, actors were given to bantering cross talk and to "borrowing each other's hats, boots and even trousers"—clearly influenced Beckett's own stagecraft. Nor did his taste for Irish whiskey ever leave him, despite half a century spent in France.

Beckett first lived in Paris between 1928 and 1930, studying at the École Normale Supérieure. His real occupation during these years, however, seems to have been reading according to his inclinations and writing avant-garde poetry. He also became one of Joyce's friends and helpers and a reader of Proust, having been commissioned to write a short introduction to his work. The influence of both writers on him may have been exaggerated. For now, Joyce's influence was most evident in Beckett's decision to emulate his taste in white wine and to squeeze his feet into shoes the same style and size as those of the Master. Meanwhile, Beckett found much of Proust "offensively fastidious, artificial and almost dishonest." The short study that he wrote—rehearsing, in a youthful tone of violent preciosity, his Schopenhauerian themes of the impossibility of satisfaction and the incoherence of the self—serves as a better introduction to his own work than to "À la Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Beckett seems to have had none of the usual collegiate or Parisian preoccupation with politics. Critics have credibly detected traces of the Irish famine, fears of nuclear war, and instances of the master-slave dialectic in Beckett's work, but he rarely mentioned politics and is known to have exercised the franchise only once, when he sold his vote to his father for one pound and voted for the Conservatives. Touring Germany in 1936 to look at Old Masters, he was unmoved by what he called, in a letter, "all the usual sentimental bunk about the Nazi persecutions." In a diary kept at the time, he is more concerned to be "without purpose alone and pathologically indolent."

For something had gone wrong with Beckett as a young man. In 1930, he returned to Dublin, where his French and Italian had won him a position as a junior lecturer at Trinity, but he walked away from the job the next year, disappointing his parents in a way that evidently afflicted him throughout his life: "I always felt guilty at letting him down," he says of his father in an interview granted in the last year of his long life and excerpted in "Beckett Remembering / Remembering Beckett" (Arcade; $27.95), one of several volumes marking his centenary.

Beckett was still living at home, lethargic and unhappy, when his father died, in 1933. The next four years were largely divided between the family estate and London, where he submitted to the care of the British psychoanalyst W. R. Bion. In both locations, Beckett suffered from night terrors—he would wake in the dark with a racing heart, in a sort of frozen panic—and from a fearsome array of psychosomatic ailments, including stomach trouble, pleurisy, and recurrent cysts on the neck and anus. The insomniac dread of Beckett's narrators ("I'm too frightened this evening to listen to myself rot. . . . So I'll tell myself a story"), as well as their revulsion at the human body, probably owes something to the memory of these afflictions.

It was with Bion that Beckett heard a lecture in which Carl Gustav Jung made a cryptic remark about a young girl who "had never really been born." To Beckett, the idea was an illumination, and in spite of his otherwise considerable discretion he was willing to confide to people throughout his life that he considered himself a similar case. The notion of an incomplete birth seemed to explain something of his feeling of unreality—many a Beckett character seems uncertain whether he really exists. An extremely intelligent, well-educated, and skeptical man, Beckett nevertheless made more use of this dubious idea than perhaps any other.

The dismal years between the death of his father and the final move to Paris, in 1937, produced "Murphy," the story of an impecunious Irishman living in London—Beckett's first published novel and also his funniest. The halfhearted plot concerns the efforts of Murphy's girlfriend, Celia, to get him to find work so that she can stop turning tricks. The book's comedy comes from Beckett's parading a preposterous collection of lowlife beneath the high arch of his diction: for example, "Cooper's only visible humane characteristic was a morbid craving for alcoholic depressant," or "For an Irish girl Miss Counihan was quite exceptionally anthropoid." Murphy indulges Celia in sex and his philosophical friends in conversation, and ultimately rouses himself to work as an attendant in a mental institution. He prefers, however, to strip naked in his apartment, bind himself into a rocking chair, slow his heart nearly to stopping, and, without quite losing consciousness, forgo all awareness of his body and the world. A final episode of deliberate oblivion causes Murphy to perish in a gas explosion that a more attentive person would have avoided, but he is hardly the ast of Beckett's protagonists to pursue the deal of a mind sealed off from the incidental universe.

Not long after moving permanently to Paris, Beckett had an altercation on the street with a pimp, who stabbed him in the chest. It points to the complexity of Beckett's erotic life at the time that this was not his first encounter with the pimp, and that much of his convalescence was spent trying to decide whether to favor as his regular girlfriend Peggy Guggenheim, the American heiress, or Suzanne Deschevaux-Dumesnil, his tennis partner. Ultimately, he chose Suzanne, a Frenchwoman six years his senior, whose influence seems to have promoted more work and less carousing. Biographers know little about Suzanne other than that she had austere habits, avant-garde tastes, and left-wing politics. Because people who live under the same roof don't usually exchange letters, marriage is a silence at the heart of many biographies, and this is especially so in the case of Beckett and Suzanne, who, for more than fifty years, maintained separate social circles—she didn't like Irish whiskey or English conversation—and similar codes of discretion.

Suzanne's politics may have encouraged Beckett to take part in the Resistance, though he was mainly motivated by simple outraged decency, particularly over the Nazi treatment of Jews. He allowed a group called Gloria to use his apartment as an information drop, and he translated and typed up reports on the occupying forces. This was a risky activity. When a member of Gloria, Beckett's friend (and a French Jew) Alfred Péron, was arrested, in August, 1942, Beckett and Suzanne fled south, to Roussillon, where they waited out the course of the war. In the evenings, Beckett wrote "Watt," the last novel that he composed in English.

In light of the grim circumstances of its production, "Watt" seems a remarkable and even desperate instance of pure fiction. What comfort an attitude like Watt's, if one were possible, would have provided during the war: "Watt did not know what had happened. He did not care, to do him justice, what had happened." Watt, the dutiful servant of Mr. Knott, whom he never encounters any more than Vladimir and Estragon ever meet Godot, is a creature—perhaps unique in the history of the novel—of pure, relentless logic. Watt considers the range of possibilities in a given situation and tries to determine what, if anything, duty requires of him. Beckett's third-person narrator flaunts the same indiscriminate facticity. Thus Watt's surmise on the activities of Mr. Knott:

> Here he moved, to and fro, from the door to the window, from the window to the door; from the window to the door, from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the fire; from the bed to the fire, from the fire to the bed; from the door to the fire, from the fire to the door . . .

Think Beckett can't go on? He can go on. In this case, for another thirty lines. Hilarious by the page, sometimes thanks to wit and frequently due to exhaustion, "Watt" is on the whole a chore to read, though it remains a memorable fantasy of a world where, to human ears, as one character imagines, the sounds of life would "demand nothing, ordain nothing, explain nothing, propound nothing." Beckett and Zen.

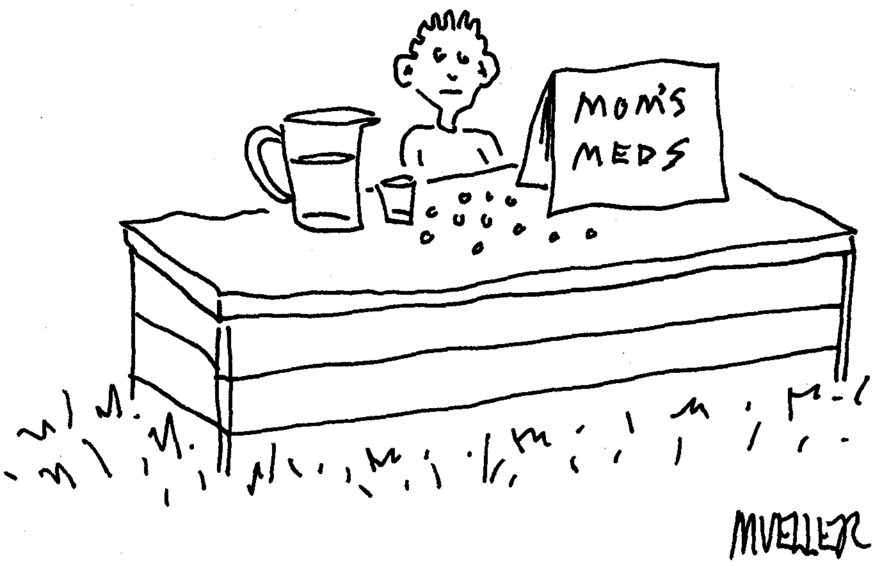
In 1946, Beckett returned to Ireland for the first time in six years. Joyce had died five years earlier, Beckett's mother was now old and infirm, "Watt" had been deemed unpublishable by everyone who saw it, Ireland was no longer quite his country, and English not quite his language—and perhaps all these changed circumstances conspired to clear space for the momentous revelation that Beckett experienced. The epiphany came in his mother's bedroom, a recently discovered fact that sheds new light on the first line of the trilogy that forms the core of his achievement in prose: "*Je suis dans la chambre de ma mère.*" The revelation, as Beckett later described it to a biographer, was this:

> I realized that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, in control of one's material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I realized that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding.

This was not a new way, exactly, for the author of "Watt," but it gave him a new confidence and determination, allowing him to write out of confusion and contradiction with a paradoxical lucidity.

Beckett returned to France, and to his life's work. The sequence of "Molloy," "Malone Meurt," and "L'Innommable," written between 1947 and 1950, during what Beckett called his "siege in the room," have in common a continual reference to their own artifice; they're what we now call metafictions. But they also express something that Beckett called, simply, "what I feel." And for this purpose French seemed a better, because blunter, instrument than English. In French he found it easier to write, he said, "without style"—that is, free from the influence of Joyce and, more important, from his own vast English lexicon, deep lyrical inheritance, and Irish penchant for rhetoric.

The trilogy proceeds by way of collapse. Beckett's successive monologuists, confined to a series of small rooms, try and fail to tell their stories; and each narrator is then revealed to be the alias, and each story the alibi, of its successor, until, pulling all of Beckett's earlier creations down upon its nonexistent head, there is



only the disembodied voice of the Unnamable: "I am neither, I needn't say, Murphy, nor Watt, nor Mercier, nor—no I can't even bring myself to name them, nor any of the others whose very names I forget, who told me I was they, who I must have tried to be." And what is the Unnamable? A blind need for words, plus the abiding sense that words name nothing, are only words.

The bare idea of the trilogy is a large part of its power. Here, it seems, is the novelistic equivalent of abstract painting; indeed, another of this year's tribute volumes, "Beckett After Beckett" (University Press of Florida; $59.95), translates for the first time a letter in which Beckett proclaims, "I can not write *about*." The trilogy has become famous in the history of fiction because of what is left out: the usual novelistic apparatus of plot, scenes, and characters. Here, if you want to think of saintliness, is a vow of poverty. And now and then the books do illustrate Beckett's dictum that "there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." But "obligation" is a moral term, applicable only in a world of other beings. The trilogy is so solipsistically self-enclosed that a better term would be compulsion.

And the issue of psychology returns us to what's often overlooked in the trilogy, which is what Beckett chose to or could not help but leave *in*. Why, when Malone wants to tell himself a story on his deathbed, does he dream up a massacre of mental patients? Why, when the Unnamable is in similar straits, does he devise the story of a household laid waste by a tin of "fatal corned-beef," contaminated with botulism, so that when a man comes home he finds himself "stamping under foot the unrecognizable remains of my family, here a face, there a stomach, as the case might be, and sinking into them with the ends of my crutches"? Perhaps the successive narrators are lured into unburdening themselves of their lives by the promise of that worldless emptiness that Murphy sought to enjoy, only to discover that this is like entering a sensory-deprivation tank: instead of peace, the subject experiences wild terrors. But, faced with the nasty fantasies thronging the trilogy, we might do better just to admit bewilderment.

Beckett's themes of solitude and death are universal, but he remains a tremendously peculiar writer. "Malone Dies" contains surely one of the most horrifying moments in modern literature:

> What if I started to scream? Not that I wish to draw attention to myself, simply to try and find out if there is someone about. But I don't like screaming. I have spoken softly, gone my ways softly, all my days, as behoves one who has nothing to say, nowhere to go, and so nothing to gain by being seen or heard. Not to mention the possibility of there being not a living soul within a radius of one hundred yards and then such multitudes of people that they are walking on top of one another. . . . I shall try all the same. I have tried. I heard nothing out of the ordinary.

This quarantined solitude, those compacted pedestrians, that stillborn scream—there, it seems, is a nightmare version of modern life. But Beckett more likely had in mind his strange Jungian notion of an incomplete birth. He claimed that he had memories of being trapped inside the womb, "crying to be let out, but no one could hear."

After completing "L'Innommable," in 1953, Beckett set about translating himself back into English, as he did with almost all his plays. It's telling that his flattish French often comes into English with a snarl: the plain "*Depuis ma naissance*" becomes "Ever since I was whelped." By 1958, the heroic labor of Englishing the trilogy had concluded on the ringing, ironical note of "I can't go on, I'll go on." Famous last words, since Beckett did continue writing fiction, notably "the grisly afterbirth" of the trilogy collected in the fragmentary "Texts for Nothing," and then, in the eighties, a beautiful sequence of short prose works: "Company," "Ill Seen Ill Said," and "Worstward Ho." The tenderness and the soft, sweeping rhythms of these late pieces show some of the gentleness and compassion that Beckett is said to have displayed as a person. But as a novelist proper he was finished by the late fifties, unless you count the unpunctuated and, for the first time, unfunny prose of "How It Is" (1961). Anthony Cronin suggests that the "aesthetic satisfactions" of the text, which concerns humanoid creatures victimizing one another while crawling across a plain of mud, insufficiently repay "the pains and difficulties" imposed upon the reader, and most people will be inclined to take his word for it.

Beckett had taken a break between "Malone Meurt" and "L'Innommable" to write a play, "En Attendant Godot"—a five-finger exercise that turned out to be a masterpiece. In spite of the formlessness of the trilogy and Beckett's inexperience as a playwright, "Godot" is all but perfect in its formal balance and economy: two acts; two evenings; two tramps, hopeful Vladimir and forgetful Estragon; the promise of Godot's arrival the next day, set against the consolation of "We'll hang ourselves tomorrow"; the opposition, the alternation, the occasional unity of hope and despair. As long ago as the essay on Proust, Beckett had launched these themes: "We are not merely more weary because of yesterday, we are other." But none of his previous work approaches the play's lucidity and grace.

Beckett had written his play with little hope of seeing it produced, but a grant from the French government enabled Roger Blin to put the play up at the Théâtre de Babylone, in Paris, in 1953. And in a matter of a few years this Parisian succès de scandale (in which, in the famous synopsis of the critic Vivian Mercier, "nothing happens, twice") became, in spite of some continuing jeers, an international succès d'estime. With its metaphor of endlessly postponed deliverance, it became a contemporary myth and proverb. Beckett was particularly delighted to learn that a troupe of Swedish prisoners, scheduled to put on the play in Göteborg, had slipped away from a sold-out house and gone on the lam.

In Beckett's early plays—including "All That Fall" (1956) and "Happy Days" (1961)—a social, and therefore moral, life is conjured as nowhere else in his work. Vladimir and Estragon's fed-up familiarity and minimal gallantry feel like real interaction, and the same is true, in "Endgame," of Hamm and Clov's sterile dependency and ritualized tragicomic bickering. (One wonders whether Beckett, as solitary as he seems to us, may not have written much of his best work out of the experience of marriage.) But before long his development as dramatist recapitulated the inward turn of the fiction. From the sixties through the eighties, his dramaticules and his novellas alike present the haunting of minds by memories, often a man's inner interplay of "time and grief and self and second self his own." This plunge within does not deprive the late lays of power any more than it does the ction—and yet this is power without eat. To witness a public presentation, as staged play must be, of such bottomlessly rivate experience as seems expressed in, ay, "Ohio Impromptu" (1981)—in which white-haired, black-clad Reader reads a tory to a silent Listener of identical apearance—can be a very chilly experience, naking that other listener, the spectator, eel almost as if he is not there.

Beckett's work can lay a strong claim to universality: not everyone has a God, ut who doesn't have a Godot? Still, when t comes to exegesis, we are mostly putting vords into a mouth constantly engaged in pitting them out. The bizarre horror in Beckett provokes such glib formulations as that of the Nobel Prize committee: Beckett "has transmuted the destitution of modern man into his exaltation." But much of the forlornness of the frightening spaces in Beckett—the little rooms, the blasted heaths, the madhouses, the ditch n the rain, the country road with its one tree, the little glass jar near the slaughterhouse, and all the sequestered, jesting minds—is that these are sites forsaken by meaning, bereft of sense. For agoraphobes, there is, in Beckett, the wide vacancy of the universe; for claustrophobes, there's the bounded nutshell of the self, plied with bad dreams. It's Beckett's trick to allow you to feel the terrors of both emptinesses at once. And yet meaning always returns to the hole it has been torn from; interpretation probes the bareness of these works as insistently as a tongue returning to where the tooth was.

"I do not know this author," Beckett said when he looked at "The Unnamable" a few years before his death, an admission from which critics could learn something. Take an idea to a page of Beckett, and usually the page will reject it. t will, however, give forth abundant mirth, fascination, fear, and pleasure. There is a moment in "Molloy" when Moran is attempting to drag himself home, where he hopes to see again his bees dancing near their hive. He describes at length the mysterious buzzing dance of he bees, controlled by "determinants of which I had not the slightest idea." It may be the happiest, most fruitful moment in Beckett: "And I said, with rapture, Here s something I can study all my life, and never understand." ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

A Disorder Peculiar to the Country, *by Ken Kalfus (Ecco; $24.95).* Like their country, Marshall and Joyce Harriman, a Brooklyn Heights couple, are at war. They are one year into an impossibly bitter divorce, and their hatred for one another has "acquired the intensity of something historic, tribal, and ethnic." When Joyce watches the destruction of the World Trade Center she is seized by a "great gladness," because Marshall works on the eighty-sixth floor of the south tower. But he escapes to fight another day in the apartment that neither will relinquish, home to their two young children—"their divorce's civilian casualties." Kalfus skewers the pieties surrounding 9/11, but, having set his black comedy in the shadow of that national trauma, he reverently charts the powerful sway that world events briefly held over the lives of individual Americans. As an Afghan émigré doctor who treats a rash Marshall develops after his escape observes, "Now you know what it's like to live in history."

The Brambles, *by Eliza Minot (Knopf; $23.95).* Minot's elegant second novel follows three siblings as they cope with their father's impending death from cancer, not long after their mother was killed in an airplane accident. The siblings' main preoccupations, though, are more individual. Margaret, a harried mother of three, has difficulty accepting that her children are growing up. Max can't bring himself to tell his wife that he quit his job in a moment of frustration, and he resents the burden that she and their baby son represent. The youngest, Edie, has fewer responsibilities, but is the most adrift, deeply lonely and plagued by an eating disorder. These quotidian problems sometimes seem overwrought, and the book's end brings an unnecessary plot twist, but the precision of Minot's descriptions succeeds in making her characters seem real and sympathetic.

Simón Bolívar, *by John Lynch (Yale; $35).* The first major English biography of Bolívar in fifty years parses the complex history of the Venezuelan aristocrat who liberated six South American countries from Spanish rule. A cult figure after his death, in 1830, El Libertador led a life that defies easy analysis: although influenced by Enlightenment ideas of equality, he rejected total democracy, fearing anarchy in the "ignorant" lower classes; determined to create strong central government, he institutionalized rule by local warlords; acutely aware of the factionalism rampant in postwar society, he was bewildered when it eventually forced him to leave his homeland. In Lynch's view, the key to Bolívar lies in his pragmatism. Leaders who have invoked his name to serve their political agendas have obscured the fact that his policies followed no single path and are meaningless out of historical context. The so-called "Bolivarian revolution" of the populist Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is "a modern perversion of the cult."

The Prince of the Marshes, *by Rory Stewart (Harcourt; $25).* In 2003, Stewart, a former British diplomat, joined the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and was posted to the southern province of Maysan, where he found himself the de-facto governor of a restive populace whose allegiances were split among fifty-four political parties, twenty major tribes, and numerous militias. Stewart's account of his attempts to placate the various local figures who continually threaten to kill each other, or him, is both shrewd and self-deprecating. Money arrives from Baghdad in vacuum-packed million-dollar bricks, but there is no budget for such culturally crucial purchases as an ox for the funeral of an assassinated police chief. Stewart's exasperation with the cultural ignorance of C.P.A. directives is as manifest as his affectionate regard for the rhythms and customs of Arab life, a quality that often recalls an earlier generation of British travel writer.

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POP MUSIC

FULL BORE

A Japanese cult band returns to New York.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

Yamataka Eye has been leading the Japanese band the Boredoms for almost twenty years. His work as a front man, manipulator of light bulbs, and vocalist (singer would not be the right word) places him in a tradition that includes the jazz bandleader Sun Ra and the reggae producer Lee Perry. Like them, Eye (pronounced "I") is a Dadaist ham: he flirts with lunacy and embraces comedy while undertaking strenuous musical explorations. The Boredoms—which now consist of Eye and three drummers—have never sold more than thirty thousand copies of an album, but they have a deserved reputation as a dogged and inspired cult band. Beck has cited the Boredoms as an influence, and the American underground noise-rock community—currently enjoying a minor renaissance—reveres the band. When Jeffrey Deitch, the gallery owner, heard the Boredoms play at the Bowery Ballroom last summer, he was so impressed that he invited the band to mount an installation in his gallery, Deitch Projects. (The event will take place next year.)

Before the Boredoms' first show, in 1986, Eye didn't eat for three days. He asked his bandmates, whom he had recently recruited, to play the most tedious music imaginable while he moaned—the only sound he could physically manage. "They all quit," Eye told me, through a translator, when I met him at a Japanese restaurant in New York before a performance at Webster Hall last month. "They said it was too boring." When the Boredoms started releasing records, in the late nineteen-eighties, their songs were concentrated spasms of noise. One involved nothing but a toy piano and the sound of burping fed through a broken microphone; another consisted of fast punk rock that stopped and started, the acoustical equivalent of Wile E. Coyote sprinting from boulder to boulder. Most of the tracks featured Eye's vocalizing: a combination of strangulated howls an high-pitched screaming. The Boredom music sparked with a youthful intellectual vigor; their records were exhilarating, silly, and sometimes almost impossible to listen to.

The Boredoms found American patrons in the unclassifiable musician Joh Zorn, who helped get their records released here, and the band Sonic Youth who brought them on a tour of the Unite States in 1992. This support came at a improbable moment in the relationshi between independent rock bands an major labels. After the success of Nirvana's "Nevermind" (1991)—a record tha eventually sold ten million copies—major labels had begun signing all kinds o bands in the hope of finding one tha could make a record for relatively littl money, promote it live, and inspire millions of people to run out and buy it. Although the Boredoms were unlikely prospects, five of their albums were release by Warner Bros.

It's not hard to understand why radi stations didn't jump at the chance to pla music full of unidentifiable noises an lacking in melody. The records are thic with surreal humor. (When I asked Ey about the band's 1988 album, "Onani Bomb Meets the Sex Pistols," he starte to laugh. "It's just so ridiculous," he said "The name.") The cover of "Chocolat Synthesizer" (1994) features two figure one with an enormous orange rop of hair in place of a head, and anothe wearing a plastic bag and speaking int a remote control. Among the songs o the album not to make it to No. 1 ar "Chocolate Synthesizer," "Tomato Synthesizer," and "Synthesizer Guide Boo on Fire," which, contrary to the implie furor of its title, is a quiet meditation involving bongos, a church bell, and wha might be an organ played through a echo device.

These days, the Boredoms rarely perform live; even in Japan, they typically apear just once a year. Earlier this month, owever, they were back in New York, at Vebster Hall, for a sold-out show that as virtually identical to and just as hyp- otic as last year's. Eye began the perfor- nance with a bit of theatre that had si- nced the crowd at the Bowery Ballroom. Ie stood in the dark at the front of the tage, wearing jeans and a brown T-shirt, normous dreadlocks hanging down is back. In each hand, e held an illuminated lobe. As he moved the lobes up and down and rom side to side, they lowed brighter and dimmer, producing a series of lectronic noises. When he light grew in inten- ity, so did the sound. The globes were at- ached to motion sensors, vhich activated prere- orded sounds on a de- ice upstage.) Eye yelled, vhispered, growled, and hanted as he moved the lobes, sounding a bit like pagan priest. (Eye's lyr- cs are beside the point; e says that he chooses vords for their musical, ot sense-making, po- ential.) The invocation nded with a brilliant gag. When Eye finally cued the and's drummers, he trig- ered, using his motion ensors, a sample of a very oud chord from an elec- ric guitar—an instrument hat was not onstage.

The Boredoms no onger play the spastic nusic that made their eputation. (They stopped doing that in 995, when Eye, during a recording ession, started chanting the same pat- ern over and over. "I had seen the sun ise," Eye told me. "I started thinking bout my position in relation to the un. I also thought that the sun made sound. I didn't hear the sun make a ound, but I had an idea of what the ound would be like.") Their songs have volved from short yelps into long exha- ations—drones built around drum pat- erns that repeat for ten minutes or nore—but the end result is not so different. Their music has never been rooted in a particular rhythm, vocal style, or genre. What the Boredoms do is capture a specific energy, and move around in it until they've exhausted its possibilities.

The Boredoms: surreal and hypnotic. Photograph by Ethan Levitas.

At Webster Hall, the band played seventy minutes of music, broken into roughly eight sections. During most of this performance, Eye and the drummers were arrayed in a circle facing center stage. The drummers played simultaneously, frequently locked into a single pattern, while Eye stood at a stand loaded with electronic equipment. As he sang—a series of loud "ah"s—he distorted the sound of his voice by twisting knobs on the machines in front of him. Sometimes he conducted the drummers in and out of crescendos and diminuendos; at other times he climbed between the drum kits and flailed, throwing up his arms and jackknifing his head between his legs, which made his hair flop over his head like a cape.

During a light, songlike section, which flirted with disco, Yoshimi, the band's lone female member, played a neat keyboard motif and sang a high, keening melody that made her sound a bit like Alice Coltrane. Eventually, the other drummers joined in and Yoshimi played bass pedals with her feet, producing notes so low that we felt them before we heard them.

Over the course of the evening, the band returned repeatedly to the title track of its most recent album, "Seadrum/House of Sun" (2005), which was recorded on a beach and consists of two compositions, each lasting more than twenty minutes. (On the album, some sounds were recorded underwater: the tide came in.) After two rapturously received encores—including a call-and-response number that involved the word "sun"—the band left the stage. Nobody seemed to know what to say. It was a Boredoms show, which sounded like the last Boredoms show and like nothing else.

Being unique may make you a hero, but it doesn't always pay the bills. Eye makes most of his money by working as a d.j., remixing records, and selling his art—abstract collages of magazine photos and Twombly-like drawings made with felt-tip pens. After his most recent exhibit, at a Tokyo gallery, his art work was stolen. "This guy just walked in one morning and took it all," Eye told me. Several weeks later, the thief sent Eye a package containing all but five or six works, along with a pair of sandals, some watermelon seeds, and a copy of his will. "We have a picture of him from the security camera, when he stole the stuff," Eye said. "He had a hat on, and he looked really cool. We are going to put his picture on a T-shirt. We have to." ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

WHAT IF

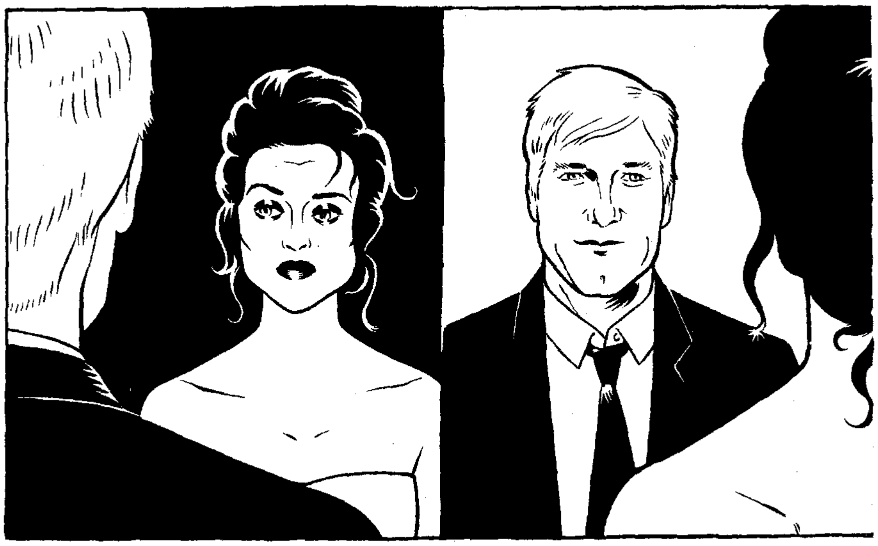
"Conversations with Other Women" and "13 Tzameti."

BY ANTHONY LANE

What do Napoleon Bonaparte, Doris Day, and the Incredible Hulk have in common, apart from the fact that they all look great in pink? One answer is that each has been deemed worthy of a split image. Abel Gance's silent "Napoléon" (1927) was designed to be projected onto three screens, in a process known as Polyvision; at the climax of the film, the screens turn red, white, and blue respectively, which may not be subtle but which nonetheless, with a live orchestra, retains the power to overwhelm. For our other contenders, the multiple shots were sliced and squashed onto a single screen, the act of compression, in every case, hinting smartly at the tastes of the time. Ang Lee bowed—too deeply, as it turned out—to the studios' near-deranged obsession with comic strips by yanking panels of action to and fro between the center of the frame and the edge, whereas the line down the middle of "Pillow Talk" was the Berlin Wall of sex, making it perfectly clear that Doris and Rock could chatter all they liked, but never touch.

No such nicety attends Aaron Eckhart and Helena Bonham Carter, who play an unnamed couple in "Conversations with Other Women." The movie, written by Gabrielle Zevin and directed by Hans Canosa, is a pas de deux about a man and woman who meet at a wedding, hit it off, and get it on. Over the course of a long night, sprinkled with flashbacks, we start to realize—dimly at first, then more oppressively—that this is not their first encounter. Years ago, their teen-aged selves, played by Erik Eidem and Nora Zehetner, were similarly entwined.

The trick of the film is that the lovers, however meshed in desire, are divorced by the cinema screen, which is divided throughout into equal halves. The ideal viewer, of course, would be Jean-Paul Sartre, the human flatfish, whose independently swivelling eyes allowed him to focus on Simone de Beauvoir *and* a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl walking in opposite directions down the Boulevard Saint-Germain. Still, even the staidest audiences should get into the swing of the split with ease. Most of the time, Eckhart grabs his share of the screen while Bonham Carter sticks gamely to hers, which suggests to me that "Conversations with Other Women" was not so much directed as handled by a really good lawyer. There is, by definition, a natural balance here that feels both witty and bleak; when two people can't be embraced by the gaze of one lens, each requiring the attention of a different camera even when they're talking across a table, or sharing a bed, you can hardly shake off the sensation of a gulf. "I wonder what two lonely people in a hotel room do when no one's watching?" she asks, and he answers with a question of his own: "What makes you think I'm lonely?"



Helena Bonham Carter and Aaron Eckhart in a movie by Hans Canosa.

Near the beginning, they look up from their seats, diverted for an instant by the sound of laughter. You think it must be wedding blather, but then we cut for a second to their common pas a smiling Eidem with his arm aroun Zehetner, who with her buttony, ghost pale face and her snappy comeback makes an amazing mini-Helena. I wa startled by the beauty of the idea—c your own history brushing by you s close that you forget whatever it is you'r doing in the present. (Does it break th heart to witness that level of joy, and t wonder where it went, or is it a comfor just to hear your young self sounding s fresh?) In short, Canosa extracts prett much all that he can from his preciou double-shots. Look at Bonham Carter sneaking into the bathroom after making love, lighting a cigarette, and sittin there glumly while, on the adjacen screen, we watch, as if through th gauze of her regret, what could (anc maybe should) have transpired—sh and Eckhart bidding goodnight downstairs and going their separate ways That kind of everyday, or everynight honesty is a simple task for the novelist who can switch at will into interio monologue, but in movies it's something of a treat.

In the end, the problem with "Conversations with Other Women" is no that it pulls an ordinary romance int unfamiliar shapes but that it doesn't pul far enough. It may be dotted with fin observations, yet somehow the charm o its novelty grows stale, and the airles feeling of a closed set begins to fester You may recall Mike Figgis hitting th same quandary in "Timecode," wher the action was chopped into four; th ory felt too feeble to support (or de- rve) such dexterous points of view. ikewise, you want Canosa to get out of ie hotel and onto the streets; to haul his vin cameras away from the clinches of one-night stand and into the serious ivisions of daylight. If anyone out there eeds a director for the next series of 24," he's your man.

Some of the best and most needling of recent films have been, as it were, ntranational. Rather than flitting across rontiers, racking up a checklist of sul- ry locations, they stay in one land and egister the tremors of immigration and lass abrasion, picking up every shiver f a restive populace. France, where an vertly anti-immigrant party is a fixture n the electoral scene, is also the coun- ry that produced "La Haine," a self- gniting tale of the anxious suburbs, as ar back as 1995. Now we have "13 Tza- neti," directed by Gela Babluani, who vas born and raised in Tblisi, Georgia, nd settled in France in 1995, at the age f seventeen.

Not that the movie is a banner of po- itical intent. Indeed, much of it will trike any student of French film as a ribute to the morose, low-key surreal- sm of the native thriller. (There is even hole knocked in a ceiling which natches the hole made by the robbers in Rififi.") The director's younger brother, eorges Babluani, plays Sebastien, a eorgian living in France, who gets a ob mending the roof of a house by the ea. The owner is a morphine addict vith a drooping face, an exhausted fe- nale companion, and the Beckettian ame of Godon. Sebastien, from his perch high above, spies on the pair and learns of a mysterious letter that is due in the mail, containing a train ticket and the promise of good money. When Godon slumps into the life beyond, Sebastien steals the letter and, with it, the dead man's identity, catching the designated train without knowing where it will lead.

This is a sharp little hook for a movie, snagging on as many hopes as fears. Is our hero on a knightly quest or a sorrowful death wish? Is he an existential gambler, slapping himself into consciousness with a hit of risk, or does he merely need the cash? When you see him sprawled on a hotel bed, awaiting the phone call that will take him to journey's end, he could be a corpse abandoned on a battlefield; but the call comes, and he finds himself, as if in a fairytale, at an evil house in a wood. What occurs there I will not reveal; suffice to say that it seems at once fantastical, a horror out of joint with the regular world, and all too calmly credible.

That calmness—and the work of both Babluani brothers is weirdly stilled and mature, already devoid of the need to show off—serves only to thicken the horror. The film was shot in black-and-white, and rightly so; color would perplex the swiftness of the narrative, leaven the brooding sense of predestination (so unlikely, in a tale of random choice), and, above all, sully the attention that the camera pays to the faces of haunted men. Many people in this film are old, but even the young look seamed and tautened by experience, as if it were nothing more than a tutorial in dread. There is a bunch of policemen, but their efforts to uphold the law have left them no less weathered than those who flout it. Sebastien alone has an open demeanor: at first, his chalky skin and mock-cherubic mouth reminded me of Harold Lloyd, but then a still creepier resemblance began to dawn—he could be a grownup version of Macaulay Culkin in "Home Alone," driven to replay, ad infinitum, that movie's absurdist violence. He even has the sweet, repellent quarter smile that used to flick across Culkin's features whenever trouble loomed.

The director has spoken, in interviews, of his upbringing in the Georgia of the early nineteen-nineties. What to the watching world was a heroic breakout into independence and the freeing of the market felt, on the ground, more like a tumble into chaos. Fully liberated human behavior, it would seem, is not a pretty sight, and what Babluani took with him, when he went to France, was a memory of decivilization. That is what pulls "13" (the film's American title is a tautology, since "Tzameti" is the Georgian word for thirteen) away from cruel whimsy and into the pit of the inevitable. When Sebastien's exploits are over, he calls home to say that he's sending some money in the mail, "because something might happen." He knows it will. His story may strike some viewers as little more than a minor fable of unpleasantness, yet what it repeats, in its economical fashion, is the lesson that Europe has delivered time and again over the past hundred years, and that most of us would still prefer to unlearn: that the primitive is never more than a single train ride away. ♦

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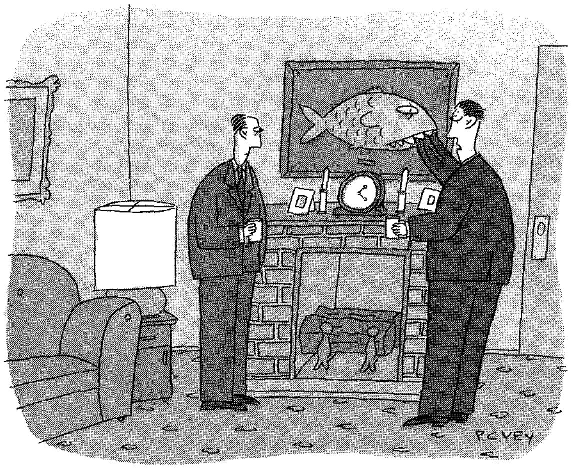
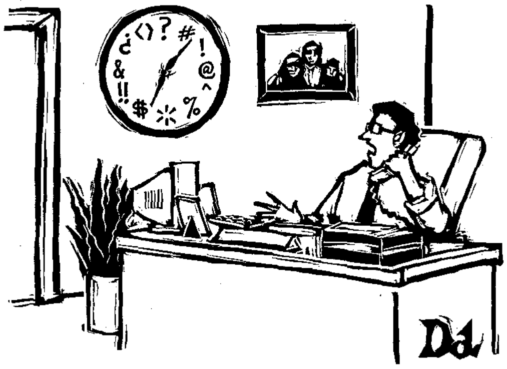
Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Gahan Wilson, must be received by Sunday, August 13th Finalists in the July 24th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the August 28th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"There may be some lingering resentment."
Tim McDaniel, Alta, Iowa



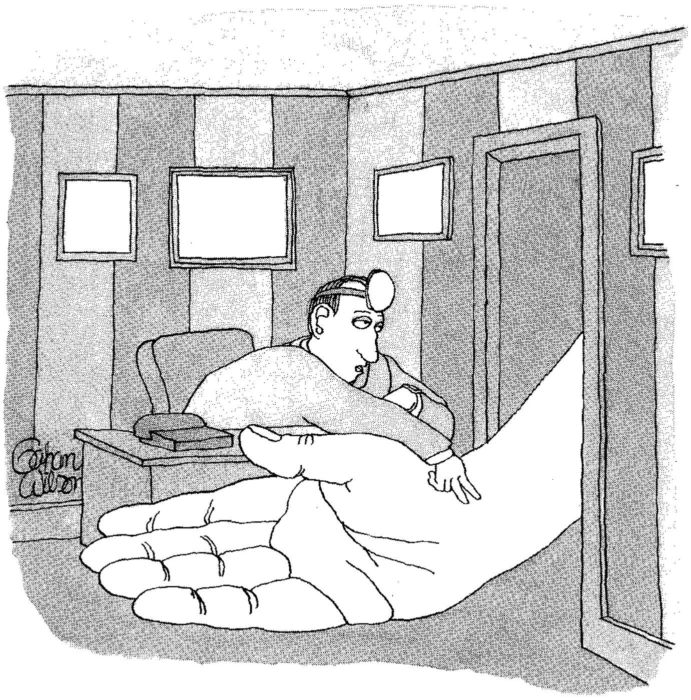
THE FINALISTS

"The hours here are obscene."
Harry Effron, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

"Oh, sorry. I forgot about the time difference."
Carol Cason, Dublin, Ohio

"Let me call you back in an umlaut."
Marcus Ewert, San Francisco, Calif.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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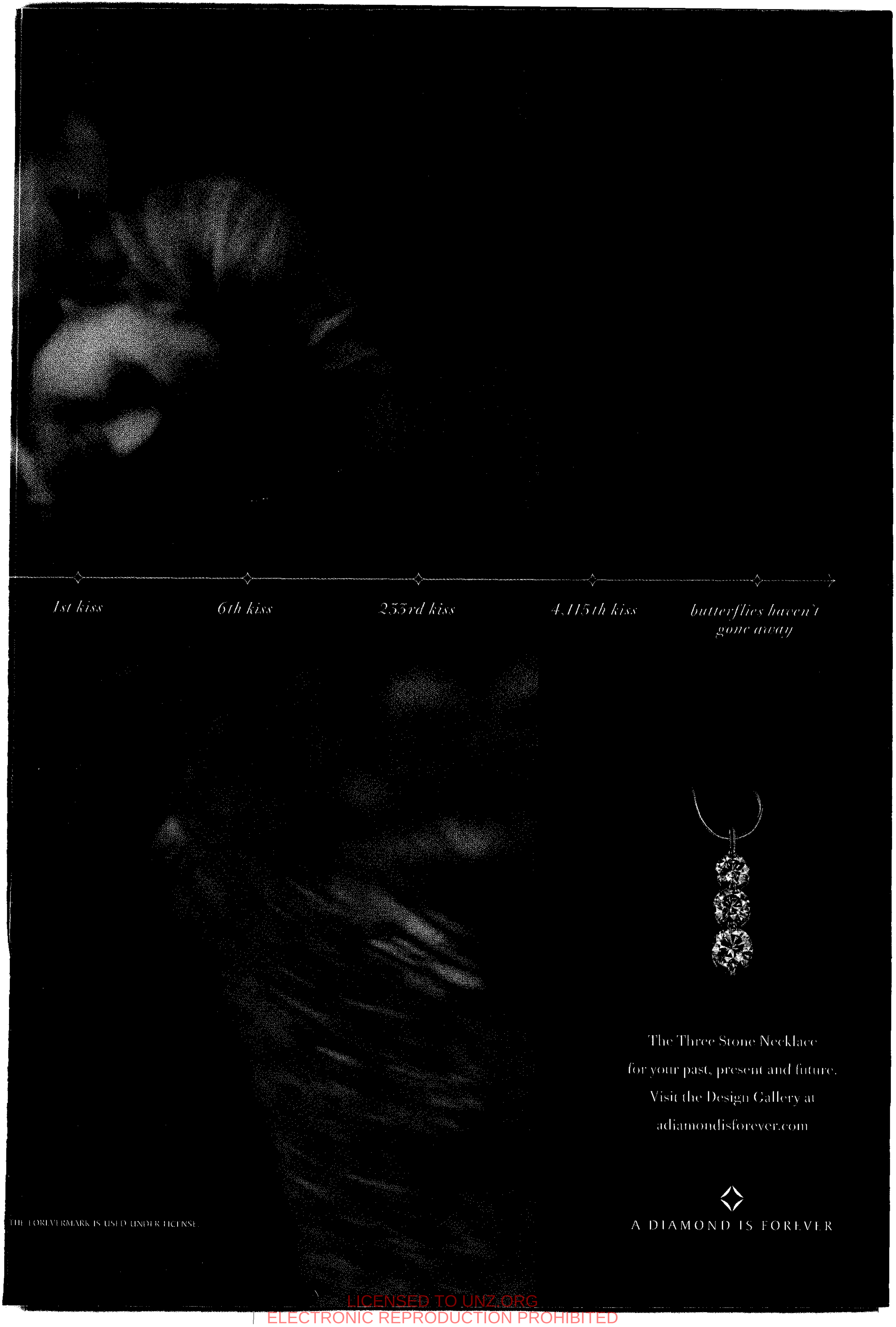
1st kiss
6th kiss
233rd kiss
4,115th kiss
butterflies haven't gone away
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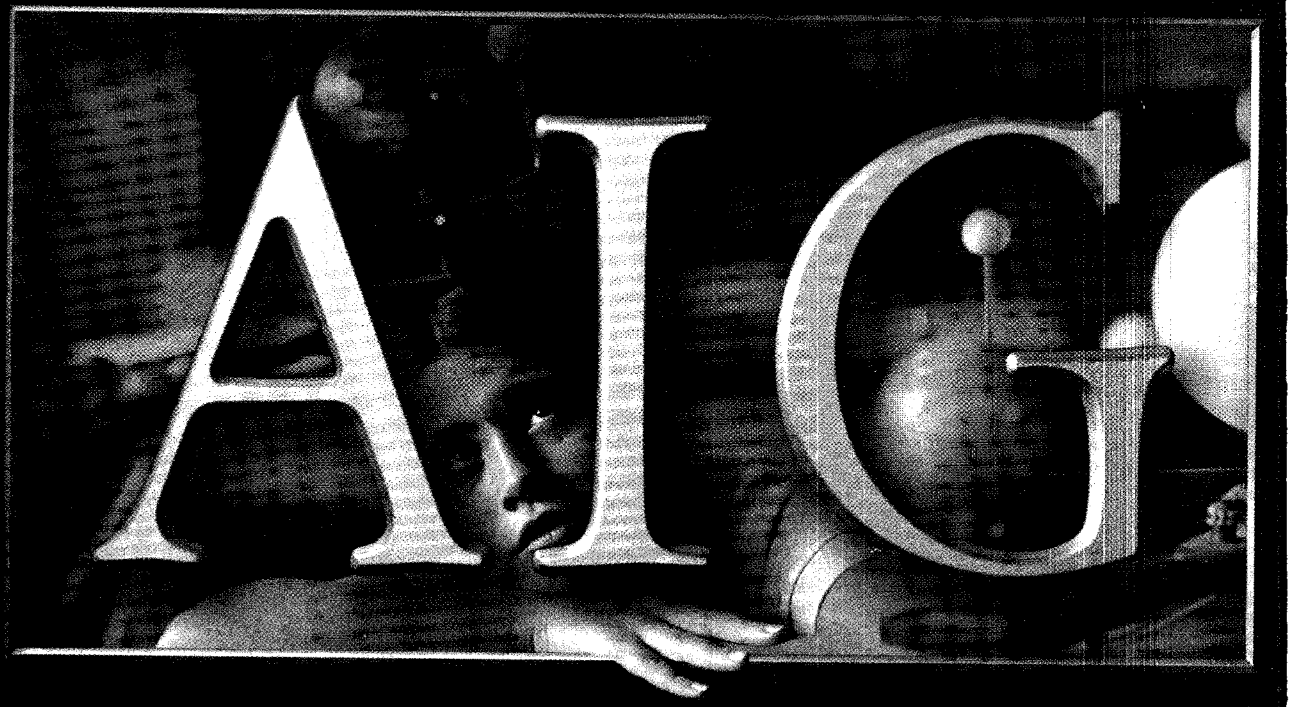

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